

LIVING WITH
VOLUNTEERISM
p.30

ARTICLE
HAS BHUTAN BLOWN ITS
OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN
FROM THE ECONOMIC
DOWNTURN? **p.21**

PHOTO ESSAY
PATTERNS OF
BHUTAN
p.27

STAY CONNECTED TO BHUTAN

NU 100
NOV-DEC 2013
VOLUME 1
ISSUE 10
www.theravenmag.com

The Raven

Your Monthly Guardian




BHUTAN'S PIONEER VOLUNTEER

The Bhutan Foundation
3121 South Street, NW
Washington DC 20007

The Bhutan Foundation
Nazhoen Pelri Youth Centre
Thimphu, Bhutan



Waste Management

Waste management has been a growing concern in all the developing countries particularly in urban areas and Bhutan is no exception. Rapid urbanization, changing consumption patterns, prompt economic growth and population growth have been the driving factors. With the guiding philosophy of Gross National Happiness as a development philosophy and conservation of environment as one of its four pillars, waste management has been a key area of attention for the policy makers and the governance in Bhutan.

Solid waste was not a burdensome issue till the early 90s because the solid waste was mainly organic in nature. However, with the introduction of television and internet by the late 90s waste management became challenging with the organic waste being replaced more and more by PET bottles, plastic, papers etc. Nevertheless, the government support has helped curb these issues.

To curb this problem in Thimphu city, Thimphu Thromde (Municipality) has been trying various alternate ways. The waste management in Thimphu city is still in its rudimentary state and lacks a systematic waste collection scheme. However, Thromde has been annually spending Nu.11 million (about 18% of its annual overall budget) on waste management alone which comprises of waste collection, transportation and dumping at Memelakha Landfill (about 10km away from the core city). Thromde has also established a compost plant for composting waste from the Centenary Farmer's Market and from some pilot areas under the PPP project funded by UNDP and JICA. With the establishment of Greener Way- for generations beyond, a private recycling company, recycling of PET bottles and cardboards has increased. Moreover, there are also instances of door-to-door collection by informal waste pickers who sell to licensed scrap dealers which is then taken to Indian border for sale. Similarly, waste paper collection system will soon be replaced with the operation of a private paper recycling plant at Bjemina industrial estate, which aims to recycle all the waste paper as well as to produce quality paper suitable for office use.

Thimphu Thromde has been trying to introduce 4 Rs in its existing waste management system but it is daily challenged by poor enforcement of rules and the absence of a systematic enforcement mechanism, illegal waste dumping, very low levels of community participation, lack of awareness on waste prevention and management and the general perception that tackling of waste management problems is the sole responsibility of the municipalities alone.

These constraints are amongst some of the key reasons preventing the municipality to effectively manage its solid waste. We must not forget that it is a wholesome responsibility and reflecting on these words - "We must ensure that with development, there is also equitable growth and equal opportunities for all, otherwise we cannot truly say that we are a successful nation. Am I afraid of these challenges? Are you? I am certainly not. There is nothing to fear. But we must always be concerned, because that means we have understood the challenges we face and along with it the enormous responsibilities that follow." - His Majesty the fifth King (9th RUB Convocation, 2013). Lets keep Thimphu Throm Clean and Green.



The Bhutanese

AUTHENTIC BHUTANESE RESTAURANT

The Bhutanese

Authentic Bhutanese Restaurant

For a taste of home cooking, just like our grandmothers used to make, step into The Bhutanese.

Partake of preparations no longer in vogue and enjoy the genuine flavours of our kingdom's cuisine, served up in surroundings that are culturally in sync.

Ideal in terms of capacity (80+) for official lunches/dinners; and, at a cosier level, for family meals and to entertain guests.

Druk PNB Bank Ltd Building

Tel : 00975-2-340133

Fax: 00975-2-340134

Email dolmarinchen@yahoo.com



Post Box :1068, Thimphu
Kingdom of Bhutan
Phone: 00975-2-321726
Fax: 00975-2-321727
Email: lekid@druknet.bt



Passage to Himalaya

Adventures and Travels to all corners of the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan and the Himalayas

Chula

For Indian Dining

Come to Chula for a finger licking good taste of Indian cuisine.

We specialise in Mughal dishes.

Enjoy our regal servings in an exotic ambience at very reasonable prices.

Our specialty is catering to official gatherings, with the capacity to comfortably deal with 80 or so guests.





16 Column

Plagiarism

18 Opinion

Children of a lesser God

19 Happenings

A First for Bhutan

Doctor volunteer

21 Article

Has Bhutan Blown its Opportunity to Learn from the Economic Downturn?

23 Travel

The Ins and outs of Pilgrimage and the Adventures to Singye Dzong.

32 Thumbs Up / Down

33 Trends

34 Whats your Quirk

35 Art

36 Know Your Food

37 Cafe Review

A La Carte

38 Stage Review

Jawa

39 Book Review

Raise Your Hands, KCD Productions

The History of Bhutan, Dr. Karma Phuntsho

43 Leisure

45 Most Discussed

46 Last Word

COVER STORY

10

BHUTAN'S PIONEER
VOLUNTEER

PHOTO ESSAY

27

PATTERNS OF BHUTAN

LIVING WITH

30

VOLUNTEERISM

INTERVIEW

41

DIWA DILEN



LETTERS + TWEETS TO THE RAVEN

A sweet review of *Forget Kathmandu* in The Raven (I love that Bhutan fears being like Nepal).

Manjushree Thapa, Author, Nepal

Issue 9 of Bhutan's magazine The Raven - an important piece on child suicide.

Trisha Nicholson, Writer/ Photographer/ Anthropologist, New Zealand

Happy to see The Raven raising important social issues. Not happy to see Wikipedia content copied verbatim without attribution.

Boaz Shmueli, Rigsum Research Lab, Thimphu

Digital Himalaya is glad to host The Raven archive. Bhutan's monthly news magazine

Mark Turin, Anthropologist/ Linguist/ Associate Research Scientist, South Asian Studies Council, Yale Research Associate, Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge

You are welcome! The Raven is a real good magazine. But only monthly :(

Thanks to YOU! Your magazine is a masterpiece!

Chris Schul, Austria

Excited to read The Raven archives on Digital Himalaya before my trip to Bhutan

Aliya Hoff, San Diego, CA

The print edition of The Raven is not so good in print. The letters are blurred, not so sharp. I think the designer or printer uses JPEG and not PDF for printing. Please check once what type of files they use for final printing.

Pema Gyamtsho, Facebook

It gives me pleasure to read The Raven.

Pema Gyeltshen, Thimphu

KUZUZANGPO!

Here we are - at the end of yet another year in our lives! It is time once again to seriously contemplate the past events and come up with resolutions again to improve the New Year, and hopefully also ourselves.

In a look back at the Year That Was, Bhutan saw major changes in 2013. The highlight of it was the general election in July that resulted in a new government. The divisive and polarizing politics leading up to this, something that peaceful Bhutan was not accustomed to, was quite an experience. While thankfully it did not result in violence or chaos that many other nations around us usually descend to during such times, we must remind ourselves that if we are not careful with our rhetoric and actions this might sadly happen in the future. To prevent this and to grow as a nation, we have to tolerate a more open political discourse.

On the economic front, we have yet to see if the new government will do what it takes to rectify the bad loan situation with the banks and stimulate the economy. The Raven has an interesting analysis of this situation.

This was a year that also saw a great deal happen in the social sector. The recent spate in suicides tells us that there is much we need to do as a society and it has to start in our homes and schools. Young people need direction. Increasing cases of substance abuse, crime and suicides largely amongst the younger generation reveals burdened and stressed minds. Things are no longer the same in Bhutanese society and we need new coping mechanisms and approaches. Fortunately we have amongst us many who have taken an initiative to do their part. With International Volunteers Day on December 5th, it was the perfect opportunity for The Raven to celebrate some of these people. There are many more out there – Tarayana Foundation, Bhutan Foundation, Bhutan Nuns Foundation and other Civil Societies whose amazing work we would love to highlight at some point. Bhutanese society has always been accommodating and giving and we are increasingly seeing more of it through smaller groups – Help Shoe Bhutan, Bhutan Dragons Motorcycle Club – and individuals too.

For the media, it looks like the environment to be in this business is not getting any better. 2013 saw newspapers slowly closing office or scaling back as they incurred losses and journalism suffered. While it is not the role of the government to protect the business of every publication, the interest to strengthen the fourth and fifth estates in other ways seems lackluster. Apart from a vague office order that ordered government offices to distribute advertisements equally among all media houses, with a special mention to one newspaper, there were no details as to how this should be executed.

We can only hope for the best in 2014! Wishing you all a Happy National Day and a Happy New Year!

Sonam Ongmo
Editor-at-Large



Post

Letters to the Editor
'The Raven'
P.O.Box:1047,
Thimphu,
Bhutan

theravenmagazine@gmail.com



Mail

editortheraven@gmail.com



Facebook

[facebook.com/
theravenmagazine](https://facebook.com/theravenmagazine)



Twitter

[twitter.com/
bhutanraven](https://twitter.com/bhutanraven)

website:

www.theravenmag.com

WRITE TO



TEAM & CONTRIBUTORS



Karma Choden is a freelance consultant and writer. She is the former editor of The Raven.



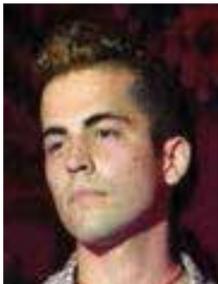
Azha Keza
(Freelance Photojournalist)



Rajesh Gurung is an independent artist



Peki Samal is a freelance journalist. She was formerly the news editor with "The Bhutanese."



Manny Fassih works at Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy. He can be contacted at manny@bcmd.bt



PUBLISHER : Dechen Wangmo

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR : Kesang P.Dorji

Email: editorthraven@gmail.com

EDITOR AT LARGE : Sonam Ongmo

Email: theravenmagazine@gmail.com

EDITOR: Sonam Pelvar

Email: pelver.spn@gmail.com

DESIGNER : R.D.Kunzang

Email: zangpozor@gmail.com

REPORTER: Karma Wangchuk

Email: wangchuk.karma7@gmail.com

AFD : Karma Wangchuk
Tshewang Dem

Email: theravenmag@gmail.com

Phone #Office: +975 2 33 77 11

Fax: +975 2 33 77 22

For Asia Orders Contact: +975 77111171

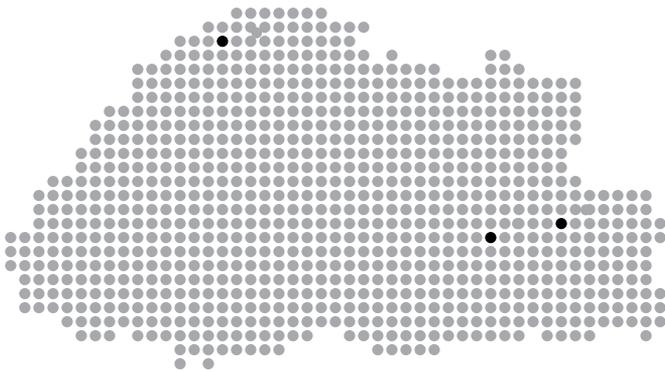
For International orders
contact our agent Nima Lhamo in New York

Address: 42-20 Ditmars Blvd,
Astoria, NY 11105

Email: theravennewyork@gmail.com

Printed at:
Kuensel Corp.Thimphu.Bhutan.

The Raven is a monthly publication (Registration no 302000004) Content Copyright © The Raven. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form. The Raven is not responsible for statements expressed by non-staff contributors or advertising claims. The magazine cannot be held responsible for loss or damage of unsolicited material. Subscription enquiries and change of address should be sent to The Raven PO Box 1047, Thimphu. For international orders outside Bhutan please contact at telephone no +975-2-33 77 11/33 77 22. Email: editorthraven@gmail.com.



THIMPHU

FOR A BETTER BHUTAN

On 8 December, 2013, the Chithuen Phendhey Association, a CSO, collected 10000 signatures in support of their petition to review the penalties for drug peddlers and institute government programs for the drug-affected populations. There were signature collection drives in Thimphu, Paro, Gelephu, Samdrup Jongkhar, Phuentsholing and Mongar. The day's event was sponsored by Zimdra Food Pvt Ltd.

Prior to the initiation of the petition, the National Council of Bhutan had announced that it would be reviewing the Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Substance Abuse Act in the upcoming session, beginning January 22, 2014.

This is not the first time a group of concerned citizens has collected signatures to support their cause. In 2009, after the drowning death of 7 children in the Wangchu river, parents and the community petitioned for an investigation into the tragedy.

CHUKHA

CHUKHA HYDROPOWER PROJECT, 25th ANNIVERSARY

CHPC (Chukha Hydropower Corporation) celebrated its Silver Jubilee on November 7th, 2013. His Majesty the King, graced the celebrations with Her Majesty the Gyaltsuen. His Majesty awarded certificates and mementos of appreciation to 45 employees and 63 former employees who served on the project for more than 25 years. His Majesty granted

a Tokha (lunch) to the crowd of more than a thousand people.

His Majesty also launched a book '25 Years of Learning' which compiles the technical knowledge gained during the 25 years of CHPC's operation. The Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers and Civil Servants also took part in the celebration.

As of 30th September 2013, the Project had generated a total revenue of Nu.51, 826 M (Nu 51.826B), including, export revenue of Nu 49.5B.

BUMTHANG

UNGUIDED TOURISTS NO LONGER ALLOWED AT MEBARTSHO

Two young Indian tourists drowned in Mebartsho (burning lake) on October 30, 2013. The deceased wife was 30 years old and the husband was 29. Both bodies were recovered. Another Indian male tourist also drowned in the Mebartsho two years ago. Following this incident, local leaders in Bumthang gathered for the Dzongkhag Tshogdu (DT) on November 6th 2013, and came to a decision that, henceforth, tourists would not be allowed to visit Mebartsho unguided.

SAMDRUPJONGKHAR

MAJOR DECLINE IN MANDARIN IN THE EAST

The Mandarin auction yard in Samdrupjongkhar has seen a 75% drop in produce this year with only 37.4 MT of oranges delivered, compared to last year's 141.48 MT.

Producers and merchants have commented that the main reason for the decline in the production and delivery of mandarin this year was due to a decrease in rainfall.

The Raven



Subscribe Today

JUST Nu.92 AN ISSUE

12 ISSUES FOR Nu. 1100

NAME: _____

(PLEASE PRINT): _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____

COUNTRY: _____

For Bhutanese Subscribers

Edition	6 Issues	12 Issues	No. of copies	Total amount
Hard copy	Nu. 550	Nu. 1,100		
PDF	Nu. 500	Nu. 1000		

For International Subscribers

Edition	6 Issues	12 Issues	No. of copies	Total amount
Hard copy	USD 50	USD 100		
PDF	NA	USD 50		

Payment enclosed

Please add applicable sales tax

Email: karmawangchuk@ravenmag.com





quotes



“Does anyone else think the idea of building casinos in Bhutan is dreadful? Given that card-gambling has become such a huge problem for some.”



KARMA SINGYE DORJI
on news that Bhutan was going to allow casinos.



“It’s a new step and a new destination.”



WANGCHUK DORJI
Tashi Group’s vice chairman Wangchuk Dorji During the launch of Bhutan Airlines’ new sector to Kolkata.



“Peddlers who sell solely for profit must serve more than the current maximum sentence of 15-year imprisonment. They’re destroying the lives of others.”



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TSEHWANG TENZIN, CHITHUEN PHENDHEY ASSOCIATION (CPA)
During the signing of petition to the government for harsher penalties for drug peddlers.



“University degrees for parliament and block on CSOs in politics puts a limit on democratic pluralism.”



SWISS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
at the 12th RTM, Thimphu

On National Day

“The day symbolises unity, cooperation and coordination of Bhutanese people. It was on this day the Bhutanese people, unanimously requested the first King to be our leader.”

Privy Council Dasho Sangay Wangchuk.

On Free Taxi Service Volunteered on National Day

What doesn’t come from big business houses comes from Taxi drivers!

Thukten Yeshi on Twitter

On Child Mortality

Malnutrition responsible for nearly half of all deaths of children under 5
Bhutan, 12th RTM

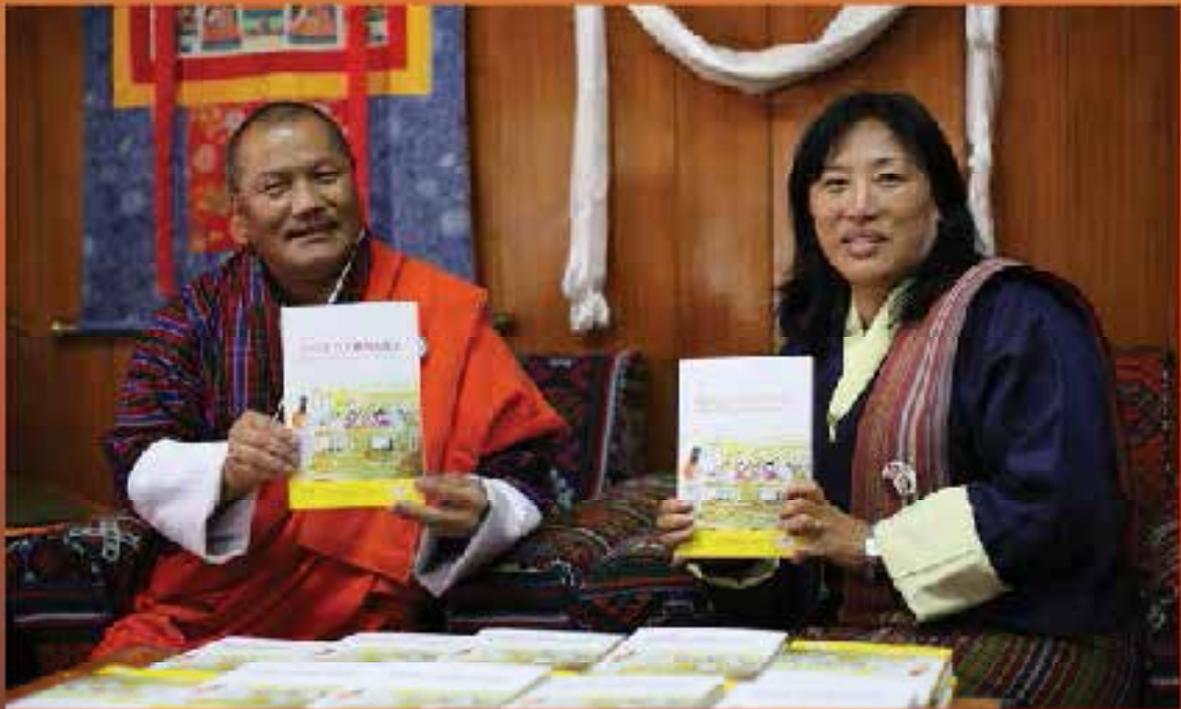
On Patriotism

I pay my taxes, work hard for a living, and strive for a society which my children can be proud; thats patriotism for me.

Drukylul (@Bhutanpolitics) on Twitter



DIPD



On behalf of the Ministry of Education, H.E. Lyonpo Mingbo Dukpa, Minister for Education and Hon'ble Secretary Aum Sangay Zam received the first 1000 copies of "Raise Your Hand". An additional 5000 copies will be donated to the Ministry of Education for distribution to Middle and Higher Secondary Schools as well as Tertiary Educational Institutes in early 2014.

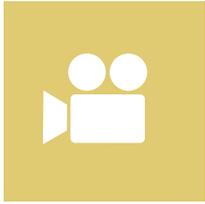


Produced by KCD Productions with the support of the Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy (DIPD)

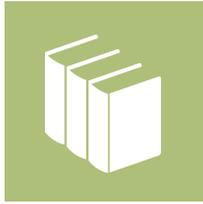
KCD Productions

Email: kcdproduction@gmail.com

Website: www.women.bt TeleFax: +975-2-328895



CINEMA



BOOKS



MUSIC



PLAY



DANCE



ART

highlights

LAUNCH



INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

● NOV 25

The theme for this year's International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women is "Commit, Act, Demand" together to end violence against women. On November 25, Her Majesty Queen Mother Sangay Choden Wangchuck launched the State of World Population Report to observe the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women at RIGSS in Phuentsholing.

EVENTS

JOCV BHUTAN, 25TH ANNIVERSARY

● NOV 2-5

In commemoration of the 25th Anniversary of the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) in Bhutan, the Embassy of Japan, Japan Foundation and JICA Bhutan Office in cooperation with the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) showcased a presentation about Japan for Students along with a Film Show titled SHODO Girls (2010/NTV/Directed by: Ryuichi Inomata). The government of Japan also donated two new firefighting engines to the Royal Bhutan Police on November 4th, 2013.

FESTIVAL

106th NATIONAL DAY OF BHUTAN

● DEC 17

Bhutan celebrates the 106th NATIONAL DAY on December 17th. The day will be marked by an award of certificates of recognition for distinguished civil service personnel. And for the first time in the country the celebrations will also include a raffle with very attractive prizes for the winners. Free tickets will be available to all visitors at the Changlingmithang football stadium. The Taxi Association of Thimphu (TAT) will also offer free service to the public for the first time.

KEY ● Date ● Time ● Place ● Venue

CUBAN MEDICAL SPECIALISTS IN BHUTAN

● DEC 11-12 ● BHUTAN

17 medical specialists from Cuba have signed a Special Pay Package Contract Service for two years in Bhutan. They will be posted to other referral and district hospitals in the country.

CONFERENCE

FORMALIZING AID, DEVELOPMENT AND PROGRESS

● DEC 11-12

The 12th Round Table Meeting (RTM) was held from December 11 - 12, 2013 in Thimphu, Bhutan. The Government is organizing the meeting in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Thimphu.

The meeting was co-chaired by the Foreign Minister, Lyonpo (Minister) Rinzin Dorje and Mr. Haoliang Xu, the UN Assistant Secretary-General, UNDP Assistant Administrator and Regional Director, Asia and the Pacific.

11th FYP will be the agenda to be discussed in the meeting so as in order to ensure further International assistance with the national priorities for aid-effectiveness.

BHUTAN'S PIONEER VOLUNTEER

"The Best Way To Find Yourself Is To Lose Yourself In The Service Of Others"
Mahatma Gandhi

She is, without a doubt, Bhutan's longest serving volunteer and philanthropist. For decades she has worked quietly and dedicatedly behind the scenes for Bhutan's impoverished, destitute, ostracized, and sick, touching thousands of ordinary Bhutanese lives in a way few have. Her name is on the lips of many whose lives she has changed. It is only fair then that on this International Volunteers day, we pay tribute to this amazing Bhutanese woman who has given off herself so selflessly and generously, not just for the Bhutanese people, but also for many beyond its borders in countries like Cambodia, Nepal, Thailand and India.

Ashi Kesang Wangmo Wangchuck is no ordinary woman. She may be a princess, the daughter of the late Third King, His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, and younger sister to Fourth King, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, but in Bhutan she is known more famously for her work with the Lepers, and now more recently with the hospital supporting numerous programs under pediatrics, maternity, kidney, psychiatry and cancer.

Sangay Penjore, 62 is an old friend of Ashi's having met her almost 40 years ago when she was but 13 years of age and he was about 20. "She was just a student studying in the U.K and I was working at the Department of Manpower," he said. After being introduced, Ashi invited Sangay and a group of



friends for a meal and thus started a life-long friendship. "It was during these times in the 70's, when she was on holidays that Ashi learned about the sad and alarming prevalence of the leprosy epidemic in our country," Sangay Penjore said. A new drug called Rifampicin that helped build resistance to leprosy had emerged on the market and according to Sangay, Ashi had heard about this. At that time Bhutan had leprosy hospitals in Gidakom, Khaling, Yebilepcha and Wamrong, and they were all full. Bhutan was aid reliant and there was little ordinary Bhutanese could

“
*I think she is
in many ways
responsible
for eliminating
Leprosy in
Bhutan*

do. The scourge was taking a toll on innocent lives across the country and Lepers were people who were being shunned and ostracized by communities. But in an era where there was no treatment, this was the only way to deal with it – set up leprosy colonies as far away from human habitation. "Each tablet cost Nu.1,200 which was a lot of money those days so Ashi began in earnest to raise funds." According to Sangay, they organized Jam sessions, auctions, fairs, and even went door-to-door collecting donations – money, clothes, shoes – whatever they could get. "She didn't want us to sit on the sidelines watching," he said.

By the time she was 18, people close to her say they could see this was her calling – to improve the lives of her fellow people. In a radical move she dropped out of college in California to pursue fieldwork in the Leprosy Control Program in Bhutan. According to Sangay, Ashi decided to go and live in one of the ostracized Leper colonies in Patpachu, Lhuntse. During her time there, she was physically active in their daily care. Sangay, who witnessed Ashi at work, said she kept herself busy assisting the health workers by taking blood samples, washing patients wounds, and chatting with them. Nado, a government employee, and now a well-known photographer, who was also a part of Ashi's entourage to the east said, "It was humbling to watch Ashi nursing, washing and changing pus-soaked bandages and consoling patients. She is a true Bodhisattva." He wouldn't be the only one to call her that.

"I think she is in many ways responsible for eliminating Leprosy in Bhutan," said Sangay Penjore. And he is not alone in this thought. "She was definitely a pioneer, when it came to this kind of work," said Dr. Chencho Dorji a psychiatrist at Thimphu Hospital. "Ashi and Dr. Sonam Tenzin, along with many of her friends have done wonders in this field of work," he said. "They were responsible for reducing the stigma related to this illness," he said.

Dr. Chencho said that Bhutan had the assistance of Missionaries, Overseas Volunteers and our own health workers, but Ashi

and her group gave it emphasis and due importance that highlighted this cause. Over the years Leprosy cases declined considerably to the point it was eliminated. "The number of cases dropped to 1 per 1000 which means that it had reached the point of elimination." Thanks to Ashi and the dedicated Leprosy workers, Bhutan saw a retreat of the scourge and most of the Leprosy Centers slowly closed down. Unfortunately though, there has been a recent resurgence after all these years. According to Dr. Chencho, 13 new cases have just been reported this year.

"Looking back on those years, I now realize that because of Ashi we were able to be a part of doing something good for Bhutanese society," said Sangay Penjore.

But Ashi Kesang's altruism extends beyond that of the Leprosy program. At a time when there were no civil society organizations she was a silent leader, single-handedly mobilizing people to support the needs of the vulnerable and the weak. Amongst her many altruistic deeds, she sold her expensive European car and donated the money to Leprosy hospitals while she drove a Toyota Jeep. She has built guesthouses in Thimphu, Mongar and Trashigang for needy patients and their caregivers who have no place to stay when they come into the towns for referrals. The guesthouses have also turned

into permanent shelters for some homeless.

Agay Phurba, 80, from Dagona is one such beneficiary. Alone, bereft and destitute, he had given up hope on life altogether when he met Ashi Kesang who sent him to live at the guesthouse near the Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital. He has been living there for the past 12 years. "If it hadn't been for Ashi and this roof over my head, I would have died a sad death a long time ago," he said. And the walls of this guesthouse resonate with many similar stories. Lobzang from Kanglung in eastern Bhutan and Rajesh Kumar from India cannot imagine what would have happened to them if it hadn't been for the guesthouse and Ashi's support. "Though I miss my family back home, I know I couldn't have been in a better place," said Rajesh, 30, who has lived in Bhutan most of his life.

Jigme Palden, 36, who is paralyzed, also lives at the guesthouse. He fell off a building in 2010 crushing his spinal cord, while he was painting a house. Soon after, his wife abandoned him and his two-year old daughter. Desperate and running out of options, he heard about Ashi Kesang's generosity and submitted his story through somebody he knew. "No matter how much physical pain I am in, I don't feel so alone and neglected anymore," he said. "At least I

“
At a time when there were no civil society organizations she was a silent leader, single-handedly mobilizing people to support the needs of the vulnerable and the weak.

have someone who cares about me.”

On one of her frequent visits to the hospital, Nima Tshering Tamang, 58, a homeless man, smelling and in need of care was taken in by Ashi. Sister Tandi Pemo the nursing superintendent who has worked closely with Ashi for the past decades said that Ashi personally cared for the man and was very distraught when he passed away. According to Nurse Tandi Pemo, he wasn't the only one in which she took a personal interest in. Lotay Tshering, a chronic schizophrenic, is lucky to have the princess accompany him to the psychiatric ward on his regular check-ups.

People close to Ashi say that she takes a great interest in the smallest details in the lives of these people. For instance she wants to ensure that the homeless patients are re-united with family members. Towards this, she even pays for announcements on the Bhutan Broadcasting Service, which seems to work, as Budhi Maya a 47-year-old psychiatric patient was found by her family through such an announcement. For Bhutanese patients traveling on referral to Indian hospitals she helps pay for rented apartments and sometimes funds their entire treatment when the hospital doesn't.

As a patron she has established clinics and wards for Leprosy, Cancer, Maternity, and Pediatrics and supports the Kidney and Psychiatric programs. She even funded building a children's park. “She seems to do good

wherever she can,” Sister Tandi Pemo says. Ashi also accompanies many troubled youth to the emergency room. During one such trip to the ER she saw that the chance of survival for critical patients could be increased with mobile ventilators, which the hospital lacked. “I was instructed to procure these mobile ventilators which Ashi paid for,” she said.

In an effort to reach the most needy patients, Ashi Kesang started a welfare fund for poor patients, executed by Tandi Pemo and the Medical Director. “Her only instructions were that the funds go towards helping as many patients who are disadvantaged, delinquent or poor,” said Nurse Tandi. This fund also provides a monthly stipend to 40 needy patients. Recently a similar fund has been set up in Gelephu.

Beyond the home frontier Ashi Kesang has also been very busy. In the early 1980's she took time off to work for an orphanage in Cambodia, an HIV/AIDS clinic in Thailand and India, for Leprosy patients in Nepal and for Mother Teresa's Home of Dying in Kolkata India.

And just as Leprosy was a scourge in the 70's and 80's, Bhutanese society's recent scourge seems to be that of addiction. Once

“
Her only instructions were that the funds go towards helping as many patients who are disadvantaged, delinquent or poor”

again, as someone who cares so deeply for her fellow Bhutanese, Ashi has become increasingly involved in rehabilitation work for addicts. At the very initial stages when the psychiatric ward had just been established in early 2000, Dr. Chencho recalls her visiting the ward simply out of interest, to talk to the patients. “She brought them cakes, books and little gifts and she seemed to enjoy chatting to them,” he said. “She then asked me if I needed support and that the patients needed to do something to keep busy.” Together Dr. Chencho and Ashi initiated a little arts and crafts project in which patients were encouraged to knit, make envelopes and paper bags, which were then sold. “The money was used for the patients and this kept them busy and occupied. They enjoyed doing this,” he said.

Dr. Chencho said that Lama Shenphen, a British Buddhist monk living in Bhutan, who has provided a great deal of support to addicts and patients at the psychiatric ward, also works with Ashi Kesang. “Together they have coordinated a system to provide opportunities for rehabilitation for needy patients in Serbithang and India. She has given generously towards this cause,” he said. “The best part about her is that she gives from the heart and she doesn't do it for publicity or to im-

press anyone,” said Dr. Chenchu. Sangay Penjore agrees. “She believes in what she is doing and this work comes genuinely from a deep-seated compassion like a Bodhisattva. She doesn’t do it for recognition.” Which may be the reason why Ashi refused to talk about herself when The Raven asked for an interview. Sangay said that the idea of nominating Ashi for the CNN hero award has occurred to him, but he feels she wouldn’t want that.

Tshoki Dorji, 23, from Trashigang is a recovering addict. He abused drugs for 14 years. Having exhausted all goodwill of family and friends he found himself desperately alone. Lama Shenphen, who met him on the streets one day offered to get him into rehab and Ashi Kesang paid for it. On his way to recovery, he arranged a tour one day for Ashi to give her a glimpse of his life as an addict in the back alleys of Thimphu showing her places where people could avail the drugs. “For once in my life, the help felt real,” said Tshoki, who now works as a waiter at Ambient cafe.

Meanwhile Nawang, 35, who also recovered from his addiction with Ashi’s help is now a peer counselor at the psychiatric ward. He has counseled more than 200 youth in his four years with the Chithen Pendhey Association – a group for recovering addicts.

“There is a certain kind of inspiration and satisfaction that comes from helping people who need it the most,” said Nurse Tandipemo, “and even as a Nurse I learnt this from Ashi Kesang.”

Apart from just the sick and poor, her philanthropy also encompasses the protection and preservation of Bhutanese culture. Along with His Majesty the King, she is also the patron for “84000 – Translating the words of the Buddha,” a project initiated by Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentsee to make the works accessible to the Bhutanese public.

Ashi’s social work at the grassroots may not have been largely recognized by Bhutanese society, but in 2008 many were jubilant that she was recognized internationally when she was presented the Mandala Award for Arts and Humanitarian Achievement by the Rubin Museum of Arts in New York. Alongside her was French Buddhist monk and author, Matthieu Ricard who was also honored for his work in Asia.

Many who know Ashi have made references of her work to that of a Bodhisattva – someone motivated by great compassion to work for the benefit of all sentient beings. “Nobody wonders why the sun shines every morning. It just does. Like the sun, Ashi also just does – it’s who she is. She is kind, warm, genuine and a hands-on person,” said Lama Shenphen. Then, perhaps like the sun is taken for granted rising everyday and sustaining life on earth, we take for granted people who are just good and do much for society without expecting anything in return.

Our generation, particularly the younger ones today, are struggling with many social problems. We are in need of good role models and inspirations, but with all the information that we are bombarded with from foreign media, we tend to forget the role models and do-gooders in our own society and country. Like Ashi there are many Bhutanese who are also working hard and doing what they do best, striving to give back to society. But when it is done behind-the-scenes, we don’t hear about them nor do we make an effort to learn about them. Ashi is a classic example of the work a true Buddhist does and should do – a life of privilege could have easily allowed her to forget the needy. Instead she has committed herself to a life-long cause of uplifting the suffering of ordinary people. It is something that we as educated Bhutanese should not take for granted, and aspire to do as well.

“

There is a certain kind of inspiration and satisfaction that comes from helping people who need it the most

Karma Choden 

PLAGIARISM

There is nothing worse for a newspaper, magazine, or a non-fiction book publisher to learn that a piece of writing that they have published had been plagiarized or fabricated. As an Editor, it gives you a sick, disgusted, and sinking feeling, and you wonder how you didn't catch it. But, like most unethical acts, it has happened before and will continue to happen, even to the best of us. However, educating the public and spreading awareness on a practice that has blurred lines in the age of the Internet and social media, is becoming increasingly necessary.

I can now imagine how the New York Times Editors must have felt when they realized that Jayson Blair a former journalist who worked with the paper from 1999 to 2003 had been gloriously plagiarizing and fabricating articles for the renowned newspaper, not once, but over a period of time. The discovery of his plagiarism was so shameful to the New York Times it was, they called it, the lowest point in the 152-year old history of the newspaper. Sadly today if you google Jayson Blair, his name is associated with nothing, but plagiarism.

Then there was James Frey, author of "A Million Little Pieces", who it turns out had fabricated parts of his number one selling memoir. Oprah Winfrey who had endorsed him and promoted him on her TV Book Club, called him back to humiliate him the way he had humiliated and duped the public.

How did he and Jayson Blair get away with it, and what were they thinking? Did they not realize that when they worked with such high-profile organizations, the fall would become

that much harder? But the story of plagiarism doesn't end there. There are many people, especially artists, who have been accused of plagiarism and been sued for it. Bob Dylan is someone who comes to mind – probably a genius when it comes to adapting someone's work as his own. Amongst the many accusations of plagiarism is one in which he used several lines from Japanese writer Junichi Saga's book "Confessions of a Yakuza" in his best selling album "Love and Theft". And it is said that artists do this all the time. "Just don't get caught" is what they say, or do it in a way that you alter the idea or work to make it your own.

While in the art world this may be ok – to adapt and make it your own – in the business of journalism it is not. In the art world copyrights help protect their ideas and work to a certain extent, but in journalism there is no way of copyrighting every article or body of work, except by putting your name on it. Even then, sentences and phrases get lifted, if not the whole thing. We just have to rely on our ethics and on each other to point this out and catch the unscrupulous ones who steal others work.

Closer to home, it was only a matter of time that this discussion would come up. Many Bhutanese have been brazenly getting away with passing off others work as their own. But before we get to it, lets define Plagiarism, because it seems that many don't know, or don't understand what it exactly means. Or maybe they do, but they simply think they can get away with it because nobody is checking, and there is no penalty for doing it.

What is Plagiarism? There are varying definitions of it out there, but the most

simple and comprehensive one from the Oxford Dictionary is – "The practice of taking someone else's work and ideas and passing it off as ones own." In other words, it is stealing, and the same moral standards apply to this act as it does to stealing anything else, only, one does not get penalized for it.

It is not uncommon on Bhutanese social media to see many wise and witty updates and statuses, quotes and sayings that have been lifted from somewhere else, not attributed, but passed off as their own. What people probably fail to realize is that when you don't attribute work/words you have lifted, or credit them as quotes, it is plagiarism. And when people find out, you look like a thief because you have just taken something that wasn't yours and put it out there as yours. Plagiarism is not only unethical but also a sign of sheer laziness. A journalist or writer who decides to lift work off another and use it verbatim or cleverly alter a few words here and there so that he/she doesn't have to do the legwork, tells you a great deal about his/her character and work ethics. It also tells you their lack of respect for other writers and their work.

But if plagiarism in Bhutan were confined to just Facebook statuses, we in the journalism and education business wouldn't have much to worry about. But it is not. A few weeks ago, The Raven received notice from a reader that an article on Mushrooms in the July/August issue had lifted content from Wikipedia. Not only that, the reader also mentioned that the picture that was used for the article was one that he had taken and posted on his blog. Once

again, neither he nor his blog and been accredited by The Raven contributor, much to the shame of The Raven. When the issue was reported, an apology was issued to the complainer, but there was little that we could do as both people responsible for that article – the contributor, and the editor of that issue, had already left the organization. Many Bhutanese who have noticed this kind of journalistic practice have aptly described it as “Cut and Paste” journalism that seems to be quite commonly practiced knowingly or unknowingly by some.

It would be fair to say that The Raven had been warned that some journalists in the Bhutanese media have done this in the past – lifting information from Wikipedia and passing it off as their own. Accreditation for quotes and information lifted was stressed to The Raven writers and editors, but probably not enough.

Coincidentally a few days later on Facebook an American woman who had visited Bhutan and celebrated her wedding in a traditional Bhutanese ceremony had put an angry status about how her pictures had been stolen by her Bhutanese guide, who was now posting them as his own. She seemed very disturbed by this.

After a list of sympathetic posts from her friends, there was an angry comeback from the Bhutanese guide who seemed to think he had done nothing wrong,

saying that he had posted them because she had given him some of these pictures. What the guide failed to realize was that even if some of the pictures were given to him, he still didn't have the right to pass them off as his own. The picture was taken by somebody else, not him and by refusing to acknowledge that, made him not only a thief or sorts, but also a liar.

A Bhutanese official from Education who had written a short story and had it published in a magazine in Bhutan was rather surprised when he saw the story reappear in Kuensel under somebody else's name. “Kuensel [had] printed it with someone else's name as the author ...lifted from a magazine I contributed to,” he said. Upon calling Kuensel and asking for an explanation, he was told that they had no idea that he had written it, as the person who claimed to have written it had contributed it to Kuensel. The person wasn't a staff writer.

While it is understandable that The Raven, if not Kuensel, at least has valid reasons for failing to check and catch plagiarism because of a lack of trained personnel like editors, proofers, and copy-editors, the blame still falls on us for failing to do so. We are ultimately responsible for carrying such work, and we must own up to it when we realize these errors, even though it means we

risk losing credibility.

In the age of the Internet and with so much information out there, plagiarists should remember - it is easy to lift and steal, but it is also easy to get caught. The practice has become so rampant especially among academia and students that it is taken very seriously by universities and schools. In many reputed institutions of learning you lose marks and get a warning the first time, the second time it amounts to expulsion. For bigger institutions or news organizations there are now ways to detect plagiarized work, but for smaller ones (like The Raven), we just have to stay on our toes, edit well, and rely on the ethics of our contributors and editors not to engage in this practice. And if they do, they should just remember that their lazy and unethical practices will harm not just that paper or organization, but damage their own reputation. Eventually, people come to know and there is nothing more awful for a writer or journalist to be slapped on with the label of a plagiarizer.

“
While in the art world this may be ok to adapt and make it your own – in the business of journalism it is not.

Sonam Ongmo 

CHILDREN OF A LESSER GOD

A month back I was at the Thimphu hospital to see the psychiatrist when I saw three young girls with a middle-aged woman. Observing them closely I realized that the older woman was one of the girls' mother, an alcoholic, who had been persuaded to come to see the psychiatrist by her daughter. One of the girl's, a friend of that daughter, meanwhile, kept complaining: "Why should a daughter bring her mother along if she is reluctant?" Then they went on to discuss loudly about the "cuckoos" brought in to see the psychiatrist. Being a schizophrenic patient myself, I was more offended than hurt by their attitude. I am sure there are many other suffering mental patients like me who would have felt the same. Mental patients are also sick people like any other ailing person and to term them "abnormal" or "raving mad" is an absolute insult to the illness and those suffering from it. It is like looking down on an HIV/Aids patient or any other patient and making a mockery of their illness.

By the looks of it, these young girls seemed they were privileged and educated. They were probably lucky to lead comfortable lives and fortunate enough not to have illnesses that others had. But here they were, judging others who by fate or circumstance were less fortunate than themselves. I quietly took in the irony of the situation and thanked myself that I had a better sense of judgment in life; a judgment that allowed myself to be more empathetic to those who were different or less fortunate than myself, even if I happened to belong to the group of "cuckoos".

It's a pity when so called educated people, perhaps literate is a better term than educated, ostracize people who

are ill, have made mistakes in life, or are in less fortunate circumstances than themselves, never thinking of giving them hope, a new lease of life, another chance or a reason to smile by scorning and shunning them.

The attitude is the same those mired in the world of substance abuse.

Krishna Kumari Biswa, who has been a rehabilitation center counselor for three years now, said that most youngsters aged 13 to 25 years took marijuana, while many aged 25 to 50 were abusing alcohol.

"Many of them feel they are outcasts, isolated, unloved and unwanted by the society," she said adding that they had, what she termed, "character defects", which worsened the problem causing them to misbehave, steal and commit crimes.

Asked how she dealt with recovering substance abusers, she said that the first thing was to be genuinely friendly and loving to them. She says that gaining their trust is very essential and that one has to be an extremely good listener and talk to them without being judgmental or dictating to them, but rather making suggestions in a gentle, frank and open manner. She also gives classes "based on the reality of addiction". "You have to let them open up and it's always better they go to rehab," she said.

We may all not be social workers or counselors but it is keeping in mind the vulnerability of these people who are struggling with the illness of addiction, that we should have some empathy to their struggle. Such an understanding – to not look down or make fun off this illness – is needed on the part of society so that people who suffer from addic-

tion, and other mental and behavioral issues can be integrated and helped in their recovery.

Krishna pointed out that in Bhutanese society, the major cause of drug addictions and alcoholism is family problems.

"If a relationship breaks, the person also breaks," she said. This is the reason why acceptance especially from family is so important when a person is recovering from his addiction. A very supportive environment is necessary when they are learning to leave their addictive habits. "Most of them have faced rejection in life and therefore are full of hatred directed towards themselves and others," said Krishna. Asked about her own experience with this particular group, she said that the more she worked with them, the more she understood them.

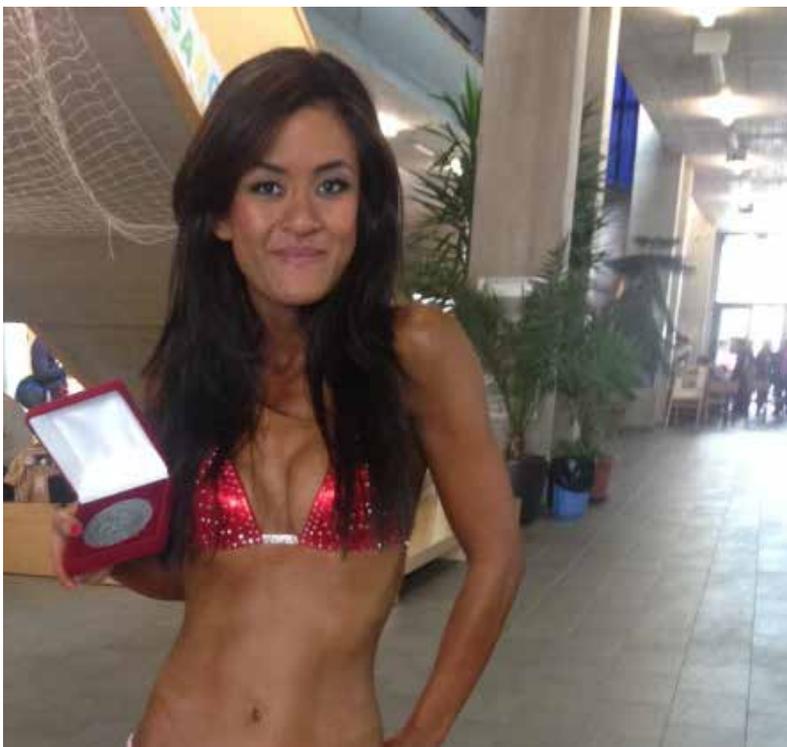
"You have to use both your head and heart to deal with them" she said.

A counselor's work, according to her, is to breach the gap between the addict and the society/family. "The root cause for many cases of relapse is often because of a feeling of rejection and acceptance from family members, friends and society."

Therefore, in a society where we hold family values as a strong foundation for societal growth, it should go without saying that so-called "normal" people need to, and should, extend their understanding for the ill. And if they can't do that, at least refrain from voicing prejudiced, hurtful and offensive opinions upon Children of a Lesser

Peki Samal 

A FIRST FOR BHUTAN



22 year old Yeatho Lhamo Penjore, a teacher at the Thimphu Primary School, first started working out at a local gym in Thimphu in mid 2012. A year and a half later, on November 17th 2013, Yeatho became the first woman ever to compete in the World Bodybuilding and Physique Sports Championship (WBPF) in Budaörs, Hungary. She competed in the Model Physique category and was also awarded a medal of appreciation from the World Bodybuilding and Physique Federation for being the first Bhutanese woman ever to compete at the championship.

Kesang P. Dorji 🐦

A Doctor who is also a Volunteer

The planet does not need more successful people. The planet desperately needs more peacemakers, healers, restorers, storytellers and lovers of all kinds.

- Dalai Lama



“There is a misconception amongst many that Voluntary work is something that only Chilips” do, said Dr. Lotay, a urologist who once worked at the Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital in Thimphu. Dr. Lotay quit in 2012 to join politics, but although unfortunate for him that he didn’t make it, it was fortunate for many Bhutanese who now receive his services.

He is now spending his days traveling around the country with a team of voluntary medical workers performing free surgeries for patients who, otherwise, would have to wait for months to see a Doctor, often risking their health and even lives. On a 10-day free surgery service stint in Bajothang, Wangdi recently, he performed 136 surgeries amongst many other services provided. If this number of people went to the hospital, it would take about 6 months, he said. Dr. Lotay is the middle child in a family of 3 boys. Coming from a religious home where both his older and younger brother, were committed to Buddhism as monks he decided that when he finished grade 9, he too would become a monk. But his parents who had already two boys in the monasteries decided against it. And thanks to that intervention, Dr. Lotay went on to complete his studies and

become a Doctor.

“My perception of religion had changed by then,” said Dr. Lotay. “Before I thought that to do good I had to become a monk, but I learned as I continued with my education that there were many ways through which I could help people, and becoming a Doctor was one of the best,” he said.

And so right from the beginning after he joined the hospital, Dr. Lotay began working overtime for free performing numerous surgeries and check-ups on weekends. According to him, there seemed to be a total underutilization of the resources available at the hospital. This was because there weren’t enough Doctors. According to him there are 4 Operation Theaters in Thimphu. Only one remains open for 24 hours the other three from 9 am until 3 pm.

His motivation stems from a deep-seated need to change attitude towards work. “Just qualifying academically to become a Doctor is not enough,” he said, “this profession needs you to sacrifice many things more. In this profession we are dealing with human beings at their most critical stages in their lives – when they need help.” According to him, there were many ways of being a role model or leading the way for the younger generation in a society that desperately needs these services – by going the extra mile to make a difference in people’s lives. “And the government has to do its part too, provide better working arrangements for health workers.

There has been a great outpouring of gratitude from people who have benefitted at the hands of the Doctor.

A facebook page dedicated to Dr. Lotay has a fine description of his good work. There are also many who have come to support his efforts. All in all, Dr. Lotay’s efforts seem to be snowballing into something big – setting an example by doing.

Karma Wangchuk 



Has Bhutan Blown its Opportunity to Learn from the Economic Downturn?

Acknowledging a problem

They say accepting the presence of a problem is the first stage to solving it. That seems to apply to our economic situation as well and everyone seems to be on board with the idea that we now have to work on resolving it. But judging by the measures we are taking, it looks like we are simply treating the symptoms but not curing the disease.

The story of what led to the economic downturn is something that has happened before, not just in Bhutan, but most recently also in Ireland, the U.S and Greece – albeit on a much larger scale with even more damaging repercussions that went global. It started off with the housing loans. It seems to have happened very much the same way it did in Bhutan, according to officials familiar with the problem.

There is more than enough blame to go around. The people's focus on consumption and real estate speculation, the government's spending and regulations, the banking systems poor lending practices and even the Royal Monetary Authority failing to monitor the Banks and the Financial Institutions when the economy was riding high, leading to the overall crisis. This seems to be the consensus amongst many within the system. "What many in Bhutan fail to understand is that the economic downturn was something that happened before in the early 1990s on a smaller scale, because of the same mistakes that the people, the government, and banks made. If the government doesn't correct the situation the right way, this problem will happen again and it could be worse,"

said one official familiar with the problem.

So the big question is – Is the present government taking the right measures to prevent another economic downturn and Rupee issue? In order to understand how the remedy works, it is important to understand the fundamentals of the problem. By the time Bhutan became a democracy in 2008, Bhutan's economic growth rate was at an unprecedented 8 percent and there was a lot of money – excess liquidity – in the system and in the Banks. This excess money needed to be invested in the market and Banks needed to show returns to shareholders.

In any other scenario Banks would be funding the hydropower projects or other big government projects because big projects would seek assistance from the Banks, but in Bhutan these are already funded by overseas aid or directly by India and so the Banks had limited viable investments. What or who could they lend to? Obviously private businesses, and to individuals for housing and cars, which has always been the case. Banks seem to prefer cars and houses because they have collateral that is easier to value and look to for repayment. This may seem like a good idea for the Banks but it may not be the best path for economic growth. Did the Banks make the same mistakes as in other economies by placing too much focus on the perceived value on the collateral, and not enough on the borrowers real ability to pay?

This was very similar in the case of the U.S, Ireland and Greek housing crisis where people were given housing loans irrespective of whether they had sufficient income to pay back the loan. When Banks became too loose on loans and took on risky lending, somebody should have monitored it. Why? Because bad loans lead to poor repayment and the Banks ability to make new loans and the pricing of property and in the end this af-

fects the country's growth and people's lives.

In Bhutan, the credit story is made more complicated because of our currency peg to the rupee and our reliance on imports. Loans means that as the money lands in people's hands for businesses, housing and cars, imports go up. Since Bhutan does not produce anything it imports almost everything. And once the demand for imports increases, it automatically increases the demand for Rupees and foreign currency. According to Karma Y. Raydi, a member of the National Council, even if the banks have enough cash, the Rupee issue will always be there. "Not having enough Rupees doesn't mean our banks don't have money. They are independent problems, but in this case it looks like each made the other worse."

As a result, in Bhutan there may be a need to put in policies for housing that provide subsidies for people who build traditional homes that would lure people to build houses that entail buying local material and using local artisans. Do we need glass fronted buildings that highlight imported materials and take away from the local design ethos? If we are focused on linking design and planning and import policies the pressure for imports may be reduced considerably. This may also mean that the government ensures cheap and efficient delivery of wood from within the country rather than from outside, which would mean a slight adjustment in our environmental policies too. For example, why do we import wood floors when we have the best wood available locally?

When the government realizes that bad loans are growing too fast, rupees are flowing out, and the balance sheet of Banks are weak based on the Capital Adequacy Ratio, they can't write new loans. Bad debts affect the capital base and one way the government could have stemmed the Rupee issue would have been by selling some dollars from our reserve. This is a sensitive issue because Bhutan historically did not earn much foreign

reserves or rupees. Bhutan's conservatism in this area was reflected in the new constitution which requires the government to maintain a foreign exchange reserve of 12 months of essential imports but there is no clear definition of what is in that basket. "The government is cautious because our reserves are not really earned from exports, but built over many years from aid money. So there is a general understanding why we are conservative or cautious when it comes to spending these reserves," said GNHC secretary Karma Tshiteem. But the government has sold these reserves before and the reasons for viewing rupees and other foreign currencies as fundamentally different may no longer hold. After all, Bhutan now receives over 100,000 tourists a year and exports significant electricity and other resources.

So all of these factors seem to have come together to produce a unique economic situation. The Banks and financial institutions had given out too many loans some of which are now underperforming, the RMA was not as vigilant as it might have been and the government was perhaps too slow to manage the rupee deficit and we have a toxic mix of a credit and rupee shortage.

The Economic Stimulus Plan

The current government is now trying to resolve this issue it seems, through an Economic Stimulus Plan (ESP). The plan is that it will inject Nu.5 billion to stimulate the Bhutanese economy that will hopefully solve the liquidity crunch. Some see this as a corrective measure, but is it a cure or does it just treat the symptoms?

Because, Economists say, that unless Banks are made accountable, the same thing is likely to happen again. The banks now have new capital to invest, so they will give out loans as a result, creating the same demand for Rupees and the same issues and problems all over again.

"When you inject liquidity into the banks (through the ESP) the demand for Rupees is again going to go up because people will once again get loans to buy cars, machinery, and construction materials— all of which requires imports," said a government analyst. The ESP, the analyst said, is like paracetamol that soothes the headache temporarily but doesn't really root out the problem. "The ESP to me is not really the curative medicine, but something has to be done and we cannot leave our banks without liquidity, allowing our economy to come to a standstill," he said.

So what is the curative measure to prevent another such occurrence? How does this affect the average Bhutanese? Are we paying a price/Will we pay a price if this issue is not resolved correctly?

According to one perspective the government is giving low cost money to Banks but nothing is being done to find out what actually went wrong. If rapid loan growth and poor lending standards were the problem, have the banks and the RMA studied how this happened and demanded action on loan practices and the collection of bad loans? "What the government is doing is it is bailing out the Banks so there is little cost from the bad decisions they made and they are not being held responsible for the bad loans."

So how do we make the Banks accountable then? One only has to look to other markets to find solutions. In the US and Europe the banks were forced to raise capital from the markets and current shareholders were diluted in their ownership. Weak banks were forced to merger with strong banks. If government bailouts were required they were the last resort and they were expensive so the bank shareholders and management were accountable for the poor loans they made. And how do they do this? By selling Bank shares in the market and if they can't raise the money and they want the government to bail them out, then the government should make them pay a price, and not at a subsidized loan rate as our government is doing right now. The stimulus money is supposed to be used in part for directed lending to certain

targeted sectors but maybe it could be put to better use benefitting the people directly through funding of development projects rather than bailing out the Banks. The Economic Stimulus Plan does not seem to include any actions that addresses the underlying problems that led to the current situation and it does not force banks to tighten their belts. So while the banks may claim they don't have capital to make new loans or pay back the government debt they will be able to continue paying dividends to their owners.

With no repercussions for the Banks and the borrowers bad behavior where they took loans to speculate on property or buy vehicles this is likely to happen again. "If we want a strong economy," said one expert, "we have to use our own domestic solutions to balance the market economy to solve these problems. Another handout only weakens the system in the long run. The Banks should have been told to solve their own problems to raise capital instead of waiting for the government, or the Government of India to solve their problems for free by claiming it was the government's rupee issue that caused the problem." According to the expert, this problem could've been solved domestically without waiting for India to save us. "Painful adjustments have to be made not just by some, but by all, when such grievous mistakes are made," he said. These adjustments apparently would also have to be planned out carefully to minimize impact on the people and the economy.

"Basically we need Bhutanese to promote savings and consume less. The savings should then be channeled by Banks to productive investments that give good profit to the entrepreneur, which then gives revenue to the government and jobs to the Bhutanese. That is what the 11th plan is focusing on," said Karma Tshiteem. It seems then that our recent so called Economic Crisis provided us with the biggest challenge to achieve and execute self-sufficiency in a way that we so often talk and dream about. But maybe because we lacked an understanding or a cohesive economic plan we once again took the easy way out – by looking for more handouts.

Sonam Pelvar 

The Ins and outs of Pilgrimage and the Adventures to Singye Dzong

“Geographical pilgrimage is the symbolic acting out of an inner journey, the interpolation of meanings and signs of the outer pilgrimage.”

– The Cistercian monk Thomas Merton

The Motivation

We were warned – from the very man who enticed us to go on the adventure.

In a letter to prospective pilgrims, Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche, the celebrated Bhutanese Buddhist teacher, stressed the difficulty of the journey many of us were hoping to make:

“We always knew it was going to be a tough journey, but even us Bhutanese didn’t fathom the extent of the difficulty. It is reallllly difficult. This is the hardest journey I’ve taken myself. It’s very long. I’ve never seen this much mud in my life.”

His plan to conduct a 10-day drubchen kindled a surge of interest for people to make the trip to one of the most sacred sites in Bhutan – Singye Dzong, one of the eight places in Bhutan and Tibet blessed by Guru Rinpoche.

Located near the remote Chinese border in Lhuentse, Singye Dzong is no sunny walk to Taktsang; it’s a three-day, 3,000-meter ascent along a meter-wide path that can only be traversed by foot – for 90 kilometers.

After sorting out all the paperwork, I joined on as a struggling, and still very much confused, student of Rinpoche’s, trying to tune my own motivation to practice.

Pilgrimage is supposed to be the great enabler for this endeavor: an act of leaving the comforts of our physical, ‘worldly’ homes to find a spiritual one.

How better to do it than to set out to the top of some mystical peak that is really unknown to the rest of the (published) world. Just try Googling “Singye Dzong” - you’ll find close to nothing that reveals anything meaningful about the place.

The Outer Singye Dzong

Day One: Going Khomatose

I arrive at Khoma, the village base, people gather at Nado’s, a small, shack-like restaurant that’s arranging horses, porters, and food along the way. A couple of monks, some elderly locals, and me.

I went alone on the trip, to the bewilderment of many Bhutanese. “Where are your friends?” “Do you have a guide?” Nope. Going alone makes sense for a pilgrim; otherwise it becomes a picnic with friends. I should be uncomfortable in my “inner journey” and without any crutches or safety nets to fall back on.

This status, though, ends before the trip even begins. One of the first people I meet, the Lhuentse District Health Officer (DHO), for some reason felt compelled to adopt me into his group and arrange a porter for me. Cool. If I get sick or injured, he can help me out, right? I gratefully accept the offer, “inner journey” be damned.

There’s also a strong adrenaline rush for the journey to begin, and I try to orient my motivation and chant aspiration prayers. “May this

journey help me benefit others,” I pray, though a bit half-heartedly. I’m not sure whether I’m doing this as a selfish conquest or for altruistic growth.

We set off for the base. “Today will be very difficult for you,” The DHO warns, chuckling. “But tomorrow and the day after will be much worse.” How comforting. Locals, it seems, do not have a high regard for the trekking abilities of foreigners. I’m determined to prove him wrong.

The road ends, and all you can see is a thin, rocky trail that disappears into a dense mass of trees in the mountains. Such an unceremonious beginning, I think, but there’s no other visible way. “You should start,” DHO exhorts me, as he makes arrangements with others for packages and other items that need to go up for the drubchen. “There are 300 people going up today. We’ll see you on the way.”

I begin moving, along with porters and horses. What I didn’t realize is that porters are living human beings carrying human-sized loads - some as heavy as 80 kilograms. Most of them seem to be shorter than five feet, weigh less than half their load, and possessing intensely vascular legs. They’re wearing shorts and some, almost audaciously, wear chapals. The horses, carrying similar loads, trot sure-footedly ahead.

It’s not too long before the trail starts to roller coaster - up steep slopes and down sharp drops. The stress accumulates quickly. An hour and a half in, I really start to feel the 18 kilograms of my backpack weigh down on me. My head bandana is already drenched with sweat, and I heave as I release my baggage and sink into rocky cavity. I drink half of the ORS (oral rehydration salts) infused water in my flask. This is



↑ SINGYE DZONG



↑ DZONGSAR KHYENTSE RIMPOCHE

going to be tough.

As I rise, one of the members of the DHO's team, Dorji, stops. "Sir, I think you will have tough time with that bag," he points out. He's already carrying the DHO's camping backpack, which looks to be at least 30 kilograms. "Let me take it." He says this in a shockingly uncontrived manner; he really wants to carry my load. I politely refuse, but, before I can do anything, he lobs my bag atop his other one. It somehow balances, perfectly, and he continues walking at the same pace.

"Come with me, Sir," he insists. "We'll take lunch together later." He reaches for his mobile to turn on his Dzongkha songs and project them as loud as possible from the weak speakers.

Not wanting to appear as a pampered, helpless westerner, I look for something to carry. We pass some people stopping to break and eat cucumbers. Dorji speaks with them, and discovers the elderly woman will be heading back down. The group needs the small red backpack, however, and a

man prepares to double his own load. It's light - only 6 kilograms - and I offer to take it. I pull the same trick Dorji did to me and just load up. I'm assuming we'll meet at the top, at least.

The rest of the day's trek is a long, consistent alternation between patches of forest clearing, where the sun beats down with intense strength, and cooler shade. We stop every so often by a drub chu to relax. Along the way, Dorji tells me about his life: how he works as a caretaker for the Khoma Basic Health Unit; how he's been up-and-down the SingyeDzong path over 15 times. Including once with the Queen mother. He excitedly recounts how his first trip outside of the country was to take his daughter to a hospital in Delhi to check on an abnormal respiratory condition. He is a really, really nice guy with a heart of gold.

At around lunchtime, we reach a pretty breathtaking clearing with a couple of farmhouses facing a cascade on the neighboring mountain. It's the first moment of peace we get. We don't have food, but Dorji has friends who are picnicking invite us over and I'm done playing games - I delightfully accept. And they have a lot

to offer: tubs of boiled eggs, ema datshe, rice and spinach. It's a feast. "Look over there, sir," Dorji says, pointing to some distant clouds, which our path appears to lead to. "That's our destination for today - Tshikhang. Only few hours away."

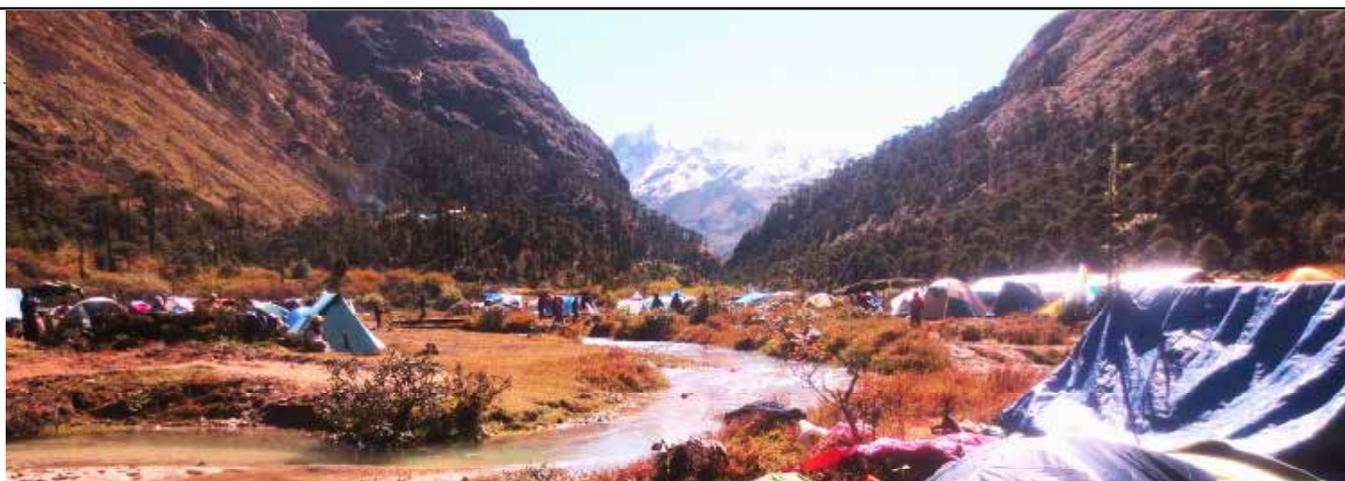
We move ahead and pass through a small village, Khomagang. It's beautiful and quaint. We pass by fenced-off fields of what looks like golden wheat, small antiquated white clay chortens, and eventually enter a more well-paved path with a line of two-story buildings, horse stables, outhouses and, hard-to-believe, people living here. I think this is Tshikhang, but Dorji corrects me. "Still a few more hours, sir," he says, ending my sense of relief.

It's 5pm when we reach Tshikhang. I look to stake out a place for my tent. Dorji finds a place. This is the first time in my life that I've ever setup a tent, but I take out all the materials with the confidence of veteran camper. Dorji sees right through me and takes over connecting the poles to the body, and attaching the cover to the ground. By the time he's assembled everything, the sun has almost fully set and we feel a slight drizzle of rain.

I walk over to the bigger camp house near the beginning of the campsite where a tarp-covered hut reveals a makeshift kitchen, busy with makeshift cooks serving warm dinner: suja, rice and kewa datshe. I devour a full plate, brush my teeth and rush to my tent. The rain has picked up and with only darkness surrounding us the only option is, really, to settle in for the night.

In the wee hours of the morning my knees and joints throb with agony, as if, overnight, the packhorses had walked all over them. My back, in spite of the day's light load, is also cringing. 'This is good,' I tell myself. 'Just watch the pain. Don't judge it. There's no mountaintop without going through the valley of the shadow of death.'

It doesn't help. I pop two ibuprofen pills



↑ THE CAMP SITE

and pass out.

Day Two: There will be MUD

“Sir, wake up.” It’s 6am. Dorji has unzipped my tent. “Come get breakfast.” The pain has subsided, though I’m still really sore. Dorji has bad news: the Gup has called him down, and so he won’t be with me today. Being the bodhisattva he is, he redistributes some of weight of my bag into the DHO’s, which will now be carried by a packhorse, and brings the weight of my bag down to about 10 kilograms. I’m grateful, but saddened to lose my guardian angel.

The DHO appears from one of the army houses and greets me. “Today, the path to Thangkarmo will be double-tough. Hope your boots are waterproof. There will be mud!” He says this with some intensity as one would the title of the Daniel Day Lewis film “There will be blood!”

Rain had transformed yesterday’s path into a marshy nightmare. What was once a dry, manageable uphill walk was now a sludgy trial of keeping my eyes glued to the ground in an almost zen-like, single-pointed concentration to find the right rocks and tree roots to land my feet on and avoid the muddy,

ankle-high pits that splashed pants and dampened boots and hopes. Forget about the scenery; I felt trapped in the canopies of the jungle. There is little to appreciate as tired bodies move ahead.

Even worse is the peculiar feeling of de-ja-vu the path creates. Every corner brings the hope of some kind of refuge, some kind of sign that ‘yes, you’re getting closer’. But every corner looks the same. You’re in some kind of eternal recurrence, a treadmill of mud, rocks, and roots that goes on and on. Break spots are hard to come by, as everything’s wet; there’s hardly any sun and it’s still drizzling.

Without Dorji, I start to feel restless. I’m in the middle of nowhere, there are families briskly passing me by, and we have passed the threshold of no phone signal - meaning from here on, no contact with the outside world. I finally have what I’ve been yearning for; I’m kind of alone. It’s pretty depressing. (Not really alone there are 300 other Bhutanese!)

Many of the Bhutanese, on the other hand, seem to be approaching it more easily. I start to receive invitations to “stop by and have some tea” where groups have settled on dry boulders and logs to rest. Not only am I too angry to receive their kindness, I’m baffled

at why they’re drinking tea in the first place. Tea dehydrates you. It’s a diuretic (meaning it makes you pee).

I meet some foreigners flanked by a group of soldiers and guides. One even rides a horse! They happen to be the Rinpoche’s guests and Jindas (donors), presumably wealthy, long-time students from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Thailand, working for Rinpoche and serving as patrons. Encountering them among the mass of Bhutanese coming up is refreshing. Nice as they are, they were moving a bit too slowly. I could have hit the brakes and hobnobbed out with them - cool people that I could communicate with - but my inner voice tells me to keep moving. No easy sailing on the path to enlightenment.

Incredibly, the path gets worse. All the elements conspire together to increase their intensity: heavier rain; mud with greater viscosity; steeper slopes; roots that smack into the arch of your foot. I prayed for the sun to arrive.

Just as all hope dissipates and the sun begins to set, we reach the campsite. It’s not a welcoming site. Thangkorma is hardly ideal for camping; the grounds are muddy, and whatever dry area there is, has been occupied. I can’t find the porter with my tent. People looked relaxed near

bonfires, laughing and drinking tea, even singing and it is getting cold in my soaked and muddied boots and pants.

I walk off. I'm cold, but I really need to cool down or I might scream. I meet some acquaintances, including a few foreigners, from Thimphu and we share a cup of whisky near a fire. They're also feeling what I'm feeling; an acute sense of despair, aching body pain. But they also feel resilient. Again, I find that I'm not really alone on this. We somehow find a way to laugh at it all, how incredibly difficult this whole adventure really is.

Day Three: The Promised Land

I feel revived. This is it, the last day of flagellating ourselves with this torturous path. You could throw me anything - an avalanche, an earthquake, an army of leeches - and I would be ready to walk through it. Nothing could surprise me at this point, nor could it drown my resolve. I will be at Singye Dzong today or I will be dead.

After a few bowls of thuep (rice porridge) and tea, I'm moving.

The day goes quickly. I meet a young group of pilgrims kind enough to offer me some cashews and raisins. "Take some energy bars, brother," they say. I think I'm finally starting to strip away my inhibitions and open up to other fellow pilgrims. I join them for what would be the rest of the way.

Around 2pm, we cross a bridge to a bevy of boulders and stones. The sky is clear and the sun is beaming - a welcome arrival. We climb over the rocks, our mid-soles and arches now in pain from jumping over tree roots. The vegetation gradually becomes thinner with dwarf bamboos, scrub rhododendrons, and conifers. The air

is cooler and rare, and majestic cliffs start to dominate the landscape. Then we reach a signboard:

"Singye Dzong"

Though we are still some ways from the camp, we are brought into living contact with the energies of this power place. We cross a few more bridges, and we see some prayer flags, tarp-covered houses, and clouds of smoke. It's the clearing we've all held our breaths for.

The Power Place

The final leg is an all-too-familiar path of rocks, mud, and incline. This time, however, there are no more illusions of arrival - we are actually here. We've made excellent time; it's only 2:30pm. A bench invites us to sit, relax, and just drop everything. We sit, arms over each other's shoulders, and take time to witness, for the first time, what our destination looks like.

From where we are, we can see the ad hoc pilgrim village that has emerged. A stream slithers through the valley where hundreds of tightly packed tents. The DHO said at least 1,000 people would eventually come, but it looks like more. Smoke billows from many of the enclaves of pilgrims that have likely come together and are probably feasting on some tea. Mountains of pine encase us into a bowl of activity.

Singye Dzong is not like the other mighty fortresses popular across Bhutan. 'Dzongs', in the context of Singye Dzong, refers to 'abodes'; in this case, the eight caves or rock structures where Guru Rinpoche and Khandro Yeshey Tshogyel meditated. The name Singye Dzong, or "abode of the lion", is derived from the shape of the hillock on which the cave where Guru Rinpoche meditated is located. Supposedly, from an aerial point of view, one can see the full features of a lion - head, body, tail

and all.

Within 30 minutes, it's raining again, but this time it's also freezing. I find my new 'group' from the day and we discover the hut where a volunteer staff of ex-gomchens were brewing tubs of hot water and tea with a fire.

As we sit and shiver, I start to feel a richly charged, magical feeling of togetherness. We are a community bound by spiritual purpose. Whatever lives we had before here just don't hold weight; they become essence-less, aren't they, anyway?.

The Inner Pilgrimage: An Act of Offering

It's a spiritual axiom that really deep spiritual teaching, practice, and transmission can only be shared with someone who deeply wants to receive it. To want to receive this profound teaching would mean that we're willing to be offered up to it.

And having come to my destination, it seemed to dawn on me - this is what pilgrimage is for: to target our inner obstacles and ways of holding back from others, by offering everything - our body, our possessions, our lives, and our whole experienced world. Only after a few weeks of reflection do I see how experiencing all of that drudgery and struggling provides a way for the subconscious material - the anger, the faulty assumptions, the paranoia, and so on - to be brought to conscious awareness.

I experienced so many swings and moments of darkness on the trip. But this 'darkness' is not my or anybody else's nature. If we take the opportunity, it's something that can be offered up to its empty ground and source. In return, we can experience moments of being offered up to our deepest spirituality, rather than our ego clinging, and released.

Manny Fashiri 

Patterns of Bhutan

Bhutan's unique arts and crafts have been inspired by nature itself and the creative imagination and artistry of artisans from the diverse ethnicities in the kingdom. Azha Keza, a freelance photojournalist showcases the aesthetics of these various arts and crafts.



↓ HAND EMBROIDERED KIRA PATTERN



↑ WINE CONTAINERS

← TIES



Azha Keza
(Freelance Photojournalist)

PHOTO ESSAY



⬆️ **BAMBOO CONTAINERS**



⬆️ **SCROLL PAINTINGS (THANGKA)**

⬇️ **HAND BAGS**



⬇️ **PURSES & WALLETS**



⬆️ **WOODEN OFFERING BOWL**





MASKS ↕



➔
BUDDHIST PAINTING

Living with: Volunteerism

“Service which is rendered without joy helps neither the servant nor the served. But all other pleasures and possessions pale into nothingness before service which is rendered in a spirit of joy.”

- Mahatma Gandhi

In a country that founded the concept of Gross National Happiness, Bhutan has known to be a society that believed in and lived by communal volunteerism. It is not an alien concept in our villages where farmers help each other build houses, irrigation canals, and even till each other's fields. It is perhaps in giving off ourselves for the benefit of the community, where the concept of the “gross national happiness” or “collective happiness” came from. After all there is a saying in Buddhism that to be truly happy we should practice compassion and giving, something that was so interwoven into our way of life. This may have changed or evolved as society modernized, and the system or spirit of such volunteerism may have indeed broken down as people moved into the urban areas to live more individual focused lives. In recent years, however, we have seen increasingly how we can organize ourselves to volunteer and give back to community as our people in the villages have always done. The examples of doing this have come from both within and from outside Bhutan. Tomoaki Tsugawa may not be Bhutanese, but he has spent more than 20 years of his life as a volunteer of which a larger part, 15 years of it has been spent volunteering in Bhutan. Today, he continues to serve as a volunteer, albeit as an expert, with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) under a home ministry project titled Local Government and Decentralization Project (LGDP).

Recently he was conferred the Japa-

nese Foreign minister's award in appreciation of his long and continued services in countries less prosperous than his own. Mr. Tsugawa also spent 5 years as a volunteer in the African nations of Malawi and Uganda. Tsugawa who first came to Bhutan in 1983 as a United Nations Volunteer (UNV) worked for two years from 1983-1985 as a civil engineer in the Dept. of Industries and mines. After that he spent two and half years between 1987 and 1989 as a JICA expert working as a lecturer of civil engineering in the Royal Bhutan Polytechnic in Deothang. Three years through the years 1991 to 1994 he was the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) coordinator in the JICA Bhutan Office.

His latest sojourn is in its ninth year since returning in 2004 when he was once again designated as the JICA expert in the LGDP-project supported by JICA.

So what drives Tsugawa's passion for volunteerism and the zeal to work away from his homeland?

He believes that to do good work, people can work anywhere in the world and it is not necessary to work only in one's home country. What is important for Mr. Tsugawa though, is that one should stay with ones family.

Perhaps that is why he brought his family, his wife, two sons and a daughter, to Bhutan through the years 1991 till 1994. He worked as the JOCV coordinator at that time. “Most Japanese don't want to leave Japan but some don't mind working outside Japan. I'm a little different from other Japanese; I want to do some challenging work. I am proud of my home country Japan and love it as my country. But some Japanese have to work outside Japan for Japan. In my case, work for Bhutan for Japan,” he says smiling.

Having been in Bhutan for a good long period he has many friends here, he says if he were to go to Japan right now he won't have as many people he'd know compared to Bhutan. “Important is... how many people I know. If I go to Japan now, I don't know

so many Japanese,” says Tsugawa.

Japanese people are known for their punctuality, their excellent time-management skills and drive for excellence in anything. And therefore it remains an eager question as to how this man put up almost a decade in a country where timing and schedules are not essentially adhered to, and professionalism in the work place is not necessarily a strong trait.

One would think that his tolerance and patience would have exhausted after all these years and he may have actually joined the pack to suit the Bhutanese majority's ‘definition’ of punctuality. But he says punctuality is very important for Japanese wherever they may be. They are strict on it because for them ‘the promise’ is very important and so whether he is in Japan or Africa or Bhutan, he never swerved from discipline in the work place.

“If I promise I will come at 3 o'clock then I must come because once we miss that promise, once we break that promise, whole trust and reliability is gone and I lose face. And next time they won't trust me, they won't believe me,” he says. One can only hope that the Bhutanese counterparts who worked with Tsugawa lived up to their end of such punctuality.

“For Japanese, they are taught since they are small kids in schools and at home by parents that ‘once we promise we must keep that promise.’ If we lose it, we lose everything.”

In Bhutan he has experienced now and then that people give a particular time to show up but mostly show up half-an-hour later or even a full hour late. “Informing is important in this case whether you show up late or don't show up.” However, most Bhutanese he observed failed to do that even. But being the person he is – to have lived in Bhutan for 15 years after all, “Maybe they are shy, guilty etc. but Bhutanese can learn more on that.”

On the flipside, maybe Tsugawa learned something about the middle path and about letting go from his experiences in

Bhutan. He feels that Japanese society is so strict sometimes that there is absolutely no leeway. Certain small things, he feels could be forgiven. And this is one reason why he likes this aspect of the Bhutanese environment. There is always room for excuses.

"It shouldn't be too strict. Maybe in between Japan and Bhutan there could be a middle path which will be the best way," he concluded.

Over the years Mr. Tsugawa has learned a great deal about Bhutanese culture and observed carefully the changes the country has been through. This seasoned volunteer takes pride in having witnessed development work in the country's remotest pockets of Bhutan.

"I have been in Bhutan more than 15 years. I know the history of development. I have seen how rapidly Bhutan has developed, and the changes in people's lives," he says. He says one way it's good Bhutan developed so fast and so well but on the other hand "there is a gap between the rich and poor, there is a gap between the town and village, there's a gap between urban and rural areas. I think you should fill up those gaps in the near future otherwise many young people will move from rural to urban areas. I think that's not a very healthy tendency for the country." He added, "It's not only Bhutan, all the countries in the world grapple with this issue of trying to address the rural-urban migration issues."

It would seem that a developed nation like Japan would be saved this trend of rural-urban migration, but apparently opportunity seekers are the same anywhere; they look for the better version of the better version. Out there it is especially the youth who still move around big cities in search for better prospects.

While in Bhutan Tsugawa spent time in Bhutan's remote outskirts and says the government has worked hard in bridging this gap through infrastructure development. He observed the construction of so many farm roads and bridges, electricity

and even hydro projects to the remotest pockets. "But young people still want to move toward the towns," he said, which means more had to be done to balance the disparity in ways of life. Places like Lhuentse, Zhemgang or Trashigang have good roads, good water supply, good housing facilities but for the youth they still prefer to move to the towns, he said. The reasons for that, he thinks, are because opportunities are more readily available in the capital to pursue higher studies, avail trainings and skilled development programs abroad. It was also the easier and more convenient way of life for young people. He has, however, also noticed that not all Bhutanese youth desire the same thing. A few, he said, were remaining in their villages and districts and trying to make a life as entrepreneurs, and exploring different and ideas to make a living. These people have to be supported, he said.

Tsugawa thinks that one way to resolve this imbalance would be to mechanize farming or find new ways to generate income in the rural areas. Basically, to come up with a means to attract youth to return to villages, or help those who are already living there to stay there. Tsugawa says he is appreciative of government's recent announcement under the 11th Five Year Plan to try and send 30,000 grads to work abroad to places like Australia, Singapore, Canada, Japan, Thailand to find jobs.

Lessons

Having lived in both worlds for sufficient number of years to observe the ways of life and the economic trends he said that Bhutanese were too dependent on outside help. "It's not a good sign and many young graduates, almost 95% of them know this fact but no one decides to do anything about it, not even think of doing anything on that." Although one can't compare Bhutan to Japan, he said there were some lessons that could be learned. Japan started all its internationally acclaimed brands from small and humble beginnings but

with disciplined and hard work with no international assistance.

He believes Bhutan can also start something of its own and not always be dependent on help. "Thirty yrs ago when I came here, 'yes' Bhutan needed help, very few graduates but now there are so many educated graduates," he says. "Even in the villages I always tell gups, GAOs, mangmis 'You can do it, but you don't do it'."

He says a lack of budget is a good reason, but he believes that even without budget you can do so much. Maybe Tsugawa believes in the magic of innovation in a way that the Bhutanese don't. He agrees it could be the mindset. "This mindset needs to be changed. Bhutan looks pampered. Leader of village, Leader of gewogs, educated need to show the good example by showing humble and good attitude towards work."

In his opinion human capacity is very important to develop rural areas but it has not yet been recognized. He says maybe previously people in a way prioritized road, housing, food in the particular order but education is very important for country development. He hopes to change that under the project where he currently works. "We concentrate on human capacity than infrastructure. Of course infrastructure is important, but human capacity building is even more important," he said. Tsugawa believes in the human as an agent for change.

Sonam Pelvar 



Tomoaki Tsugawa



kuenselonline

JDWNRH receives medical equipment and supplies from patron Ashi Kesang Wangmo Wangchuck



BBS.bt

Fire damages over 1000 acres of forest in Dungmithang, Bumthang



Twitter

Business Bhutan, country's only financial paper closing shop



Twitter

Fungus on the inner lid of Bhutan Agro product?



BBS.bt

Kesang Chuki Dorjee and Lungten Zangmo Wangchuk picked to be part of Asia Society's Asia 21 Young Leaders, Class of 2013-2014



Twitter

The Dzongkha Development Commission's much anticipated and awaited, online Dzongkha dictionary is finally here



Two poachers were caught above Gasa Dzong in Gasa Dzongkhag (District) on the night of November 2nd, 2013.



Two fire engines were donated by the Japanese government to the Government of Bhutan.



Two Indian tourists died from drowning during their visit to Mebartsho on October 30th. The two tourists were unguided.



Two-day annual medical conference began on November 16 at the National Institute of Traditional Medicine Conference Hall, Kawajangsa. This is the third annual conference themed 'Promoting evidence based healthcare.'



Police in Gasa have arrested a 33-year old man for poaching musk deer on the night of November 7, and three men are on the run.



The first flock of three black necked cranes landed in Bumdeling, Trashiyangtse on the night of November 3. They were spotted on November 4 with two adults and one juvenile crane.

Trends

Sabah Products

KEY Brand Where to buy Contact



NU.
3K-6K

Yathra Coats/Jackets (wooden buttons)

NU.
400 EACH



Yathra Laptop Case – Nu. 890

NU.
890



Handbag, Silk on Cotton – Nu. 650 - 1000

NU.
650-1K



Yathra Cushion Covers

NU.
2000



Cushion Covers Silk on Cotton (Set of 5)

All products made by members of SABAHI

Sabah Bhutan Handicrafts
Craft Bazaar (Stall No. 46)
Chubachhu (Opposite BDBL)
Norzin Lam
Thimphu, Bhutan.



SOLLY BABA

Age?

25, but I still feel 16

Where are you from?

Thimphu

How do you define life?

In this time that we're living in, I think life is all about remembering the simple things that bring real joy

Define Love?

Love is happiness in the manner that you share and receive it.

Your Profession?

Freelance videographer/editor

What/Who inspires what you do?

I think I'm more inspired with the possibilities to tell a story, or get a message across through films/videos...

Your favorite genre of music?

Nothing beats Heavy Metal

What do you hope to achieve?

I just want to keep making short videos, that is all.

What are your other interests?

Photography

Who is your Role Model?

My father, because when I look at him, I see a simple and content person, with nothing much to lose, and that's exactly where I want to be.

One thing you'd like to change about yourself?

I can be really lazy, at times.

What are you obsessing on right now?

Reading, I guess. I have a whole lot of books to finish... and I've been sketching a lot lately!

Like?

Road-trips, trekking, and I like live music.

Dislike?

Sunday Hangovers

What's your Quirk?

I don't know if it'll pass for a quirk, but my friends tell me that i have a unique way of expressing myself with my body, makes them laugh.





Artist: *Rajesh Gurung*
Medium: *Mixed media*
Title: *Introspection*

KNOW YOUR FOOD

CHILI



Chillies or Chilies, grown almost everywhere and easily cultivated, is scientifically known as *Capsicum annum* L (mild and sweet peppers) and *Capsicum frutescens* L (stronger, hotter and more pungent), get their heat from a chemical called Capsaicin. So, the more Capsaicin, the hotter the Chili.

The Chili with the most Capsaicin content, making it the hottest Chili in the world so far, is said to be the Trinidad Scorpion Butch T, which on a scale of 1-100 is a scorching 100. Second to that is the Naga Ghost Pepper, also known as the Naga Jolkia. Following that, in descending order, are the Habanero, Indian/Thai Pepper, Cayenne, Chipotle, the Jalapeno, Poblano/Anaheim Pepper, Pimiento and finally, the Bell Pepper with the lowest Capsaicin content.

Chiles contain vitamins B1 and B2, beta carotene, protein, calcium, phosphorous and are also a good source of Vitamin C. A chemical called Chilli Oleoresin-1 is also extracted from some chilies and is used as an ingredient in manufacturing prickly heat powders, pain balms and plasters. They are also said to aid blood circulation in the body and treat several, minor stomach ailments.

For Bhutanese though, Chilies are not considered a spice or used specifically for medicinal purposes. Chilies are an integral part of our food. It is our most prized vegetable and is part of, or compliments, nearly every single dish in Bhutanese Cuisine today.

Karma Wangchuk 🐦

Amount Per 100 grams ▾	
Calories 40	
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 0.2 g	0%
Saturated fat 0 g	0%
Polyunsaturated fat 0.1 g	
Monounsaturated fat 0 g	
Cholesterol 0 mg	0%
Sodium 7 mg	0%
Potassium 340 mg	9%
Total Carbohydrate 9 g	3%
Dietary fiber 1.5 g	6%
Sugar 5 g	
Protein 2 g	4%
Vitamin A	23%
Vitamin C	404%
Calcium	1%
Iron	6%
Vitamin D	0%
Vitamin B-6	15%
Vitamin B-12	0%
Magnesium	6%

*Per cent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

Sources include: USDA

Feedback/More info



Source <http://top10buzz.com/top-10-words-chili-peppers/>



REVIEW

Restaurant



WHERE
1st floor, Yangchenma Building, Chang lam (above Mojo Park)

EXTRA
wifi

TIMING
10am - 10pm



An ordinary signboard that reads 'A La Carte' hanging from one of the verandas above the front entrance of Mojo Park - a live music bar and lounge that I frequent – was something I reluctantly noticed a while ago from seeing people going up and down the side alley. I finally decided to steal a lunch break and go see for myself what the place and food was like.

Upon climbing the narrow stairway up the side of the building, I expect to walk into a small congested area, but I'm taken by complete surprise when I enter a very large open space that could very loosely fit, at least 30-40 people and then some. I notice the décor, which seems to me a work in progress which I later confirm, is indeed so. I am greeted by a very pleasant lady who I later find out, is the wife of one of the two partners.

A La Carte is a partnership between two friends, Ugyen Choezang and Dechen Pelden, both very young, and both of whom earlier worked as Sous Chefs at the Aman Resort in Bhutan.

Their menu is varied, but limited to 10 items – a Rice Noodle Soup (with minced beef, spinach, celery, fried garlic and coriander), Thai Style Fried Rice (with chicken, eggs, cabbage and spinach), another popular thai street food called the Pad Thai (soaked dried rice noodles, Prawns, Bean Sprouts, Spring Onions, Coriander, Peanuts & Shallots), a Panini (with Ham, Grilled Chilies, Mozzarella & Potato Chips), Hot Dog (Mustard, Buffalo Sauce, Gouda & Fries), Burgers (Chicken/ Beef) served with a side of fries that were certainly better than the Burger itself, a fair attempt at a Spaghetti Bolognese and the AFC (signature fried chicken served with coleslaw), very popular with the regulars. A chocolate or Ice Cream Crepe is also the only sweet treat on the menu.

But, the winner for me, was the bhutanese twist on the popular spicy thai salad called the Som Tam, Young Papaya Salad – a combination of the five main flavours of thai local cuisine: sour, salty, hot, pungent fish sauce, and the sweetness of palm sugar. It was bang on! An the extra chili, as requested, only made it better

Prices for all items on the menu range from Nu. 100 - 195.

Kesang P.Dorji 🐦


REVIEW
STAGE

JAWA



Yangdon is in love with Tenzin. But she is faced with the brutal reality of his betrayal, when he does not accept the news of her pregnancy. In desperation, Yangdon goes to speak with Tenzin's parents. But unfortunately the response she gets from them is no better, and instead gets thrown out of their house abusively. Out of shame, Yangdon commits suicide.

Yangdon's mother, Aum Om, encounters Tenzin's father, Ap Dhendup. She reminds him of their past, where Ap Dhendup tricked Aum Om and sold her to a businessman. Aum Om threatens to not cremate her daughter's dead body or perform any rituals. In revenge of their action towards Yangdon, she promises to ensure the rising of her daughter's spirit using black magic.

As a result, Yangdon's spirit haunts Tenzin's family and in the end kills Tenzin and his father, Ap Dhendup. Yangdon forgives Tenzin's mother, Aum Dechen, after she begs for forgiveness and shows

remorse. Aside from the supernatural element of vengeful spirits in the production the rest of the presentation of Jawa dwells on the 'boy met girl, boy gets girl pregnant, boy unwilling to accept girl... and the melodrama that follows.' As Bollywood-ish as it may be, Jawa is not in essence presented to the viewers with the same agenda. That for one is because it is a play artistically packaged with the aid of modern technology of lights and sounds. It also seems to combine certain elements that will make it appealing for a Bhutanese audience, the rising from the dead, the revenge of the disadvantaged. The sets for the theatrical play designed by experts from Bhutan and India also seemed to please the Bhutanese audience who for a long time were treated to background scenes that were most often than not attuned with mood, plot or generally changing tone of emotions in the plays. The change in costumes in the

presentation of Jawa adjusting to the spirit of the play is also a shift from the local plays or dramas in the past that never did risk the need to go with character definitions of actors. Therefore actors in those days never budged from the traditional attire for any role. The visibly impressed public has not missed this aspect in the theatrical presentation.

However it remains in good faith that the makers and creators of this play do not intend to deride everything that has been produced in the old days. The makers of Jawa say their chief plan is to revive the art of theatre in the country to possibly make it an alternative in the avenues of entertainment. Judging by how this play was presented it cannot be argued that introducing a few evolutionary devices in the art does help to drive home the point.

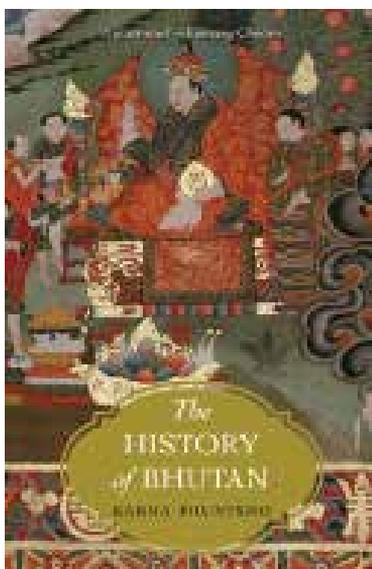
Producer of the play Ugyen Dorji says the idea for the play was developed three years back. It can assumedly be said here it was a good long, but well-allotted time frame for an idea that did go down acceptably well with its audience. Norling Drayang will take the drama to other dzongkhags depending on the audience it receives. In terms of cost more than Nu 4M has been invested to bring out the play. It was directed by Gyem Dorji.

Sonam Pelvar 



REVIEW BOOK

Judging by its size the “The History of Bhutan” may appear to be a daunting read, but it should be essential and recommended for all Bhutanese. Our school curriculums only scratch the surface of Bhutanese history leaving many of us with a fragmented and incomplete knowledge of our country.



THE HISTORY OF BHUTAN'



AUTHOR
Dr. Karma Phuntsho

PUBLISHER
Random House

The book could be the most comprehensive work to date and provides detailed information on the country's origin, how it got its name, languages, origin of people, and traces the history from its earliest period to date. Because of the information, the details it entails, and the simplicity in language, the Education System should put this book on the curriculum of Bhutanese High Schools or Colleges. In this way, students not only absorb the latest updated, well-researched information on the country's history and geography, but it also encourages and instills Bhutanese literary pride. But the author feels that Bhutanese students should try and read the works on Bhutan's history written in Dzongkha and not in English.

“My book was primarily written for a non-Bhutanese audience with some knowledge of Bhutan, that is why the long geographic, linguistic and cultural introduction,” he said. But whoever the audience, it may be time that Bhutanese students learned to absorb studies on Bhutan just the way outsiders or foreigners would. Otherwise it would indeed be a big loss or waste of an academic study of such a proportion. It is also assumed that the Bhutanese would have this knowledge, when we don't, and so sometimes a foreigner winds up knowing more about our country than we do.

What is great about this work is that it has been undertaken by a Bhutanese and makes us proud that we have amongst us someone who painstakingly researched and put together this immense body of work. There is much that has been written about Bhutan, often by foreign authors, but most of their work only outlines Bhutan's history in sketchy details. Karma Phuntsho's book, on the other hand, chronologically traces the secular and religious course of the country from its existence to modern times with fascinating detail.

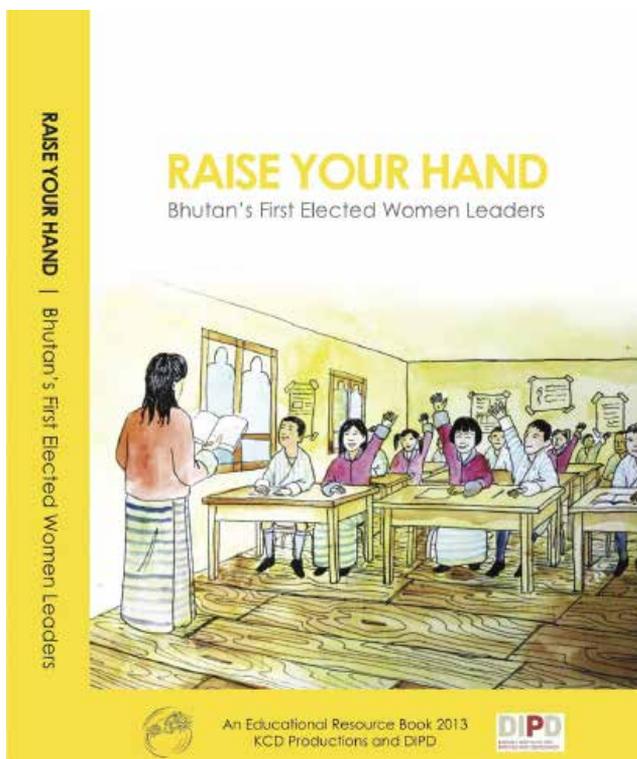
According to Karma Phuntsho, there are many complete works on Bhutan History in Dzongkha, but only partial ones in English. The idea for the book in English came about while he was researching Pema Lingpa, the treasure revealer, and his notes gradually became the skeleton for the book. “There was need also for a more objective history, beside the state-sponsored [one], and all the better if a Bhutanese did it,” he said. “I happened to be in the best position to combine traditional historical perspectives with modern historiography although I was not really trained as a historian.”

Karma Phuntsho had his early education in Bhutan's monasteries and mostly in Dzongkha. He then went on to Oxford and then worked as a research fellow at Cambridge and at CNRS Paris. Apart from being one of the leading scholars in Bhutan, he started the Loden Foundation that supports education and promotes learning and entrepreneurship in Bhutan and the Himalayas.

Sonam Ongmo 



REVIEW BOOK



In an attempt to educate and promote awareness on the need for women's participation in politics and to aspire for leadership roles, Kesang Chuki Dorjee, a documentarian and a mother of two, initiated an educational resource book – Raise Your Hand.

The book, rather official looking in its stance, has been compiled as a resource guide for high school students and teachers. It has a collection of articles outlining and explaining what a Democracy is, the structure of the Bhutanese government, women's participation in politics in general, and a profiling of all Bhutanese elected women political candidates.

The book is a testament to Kesang Chuki Dorjee's dedication to promote women's participation in the social and political sphere and overall women's issues in general. In 2012, she produced a documentary La, Aum Lyonchen – Yes, Madam Prime Minister, under a project "Bhutan Women Forward" that was supported by the Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy.

"The book is an effort to inspire today's youth, especially young girls and women, to realize why it is so important to take an interest in how government and politics affect our lives....," said Kesang.

Raise Your Hand

Bhutan's first Elected Women Leaders

Sonam Ongmo 



AUTHOR
KCD PRODUCTIONS

PUBLISHER
KCD PRODUCTIONS AND DIPD

WITH THE FINANCE MINISTER

The Bhutanese economy is currently in transition to recover from an array of economic problems and the Finance Minister of Bhutan says with the government Economic Stimulus Plan (ESP) in motion and other conditions being created by the government it is on the mend. He talked to The Raven's Sonam Pelvar about this recently.



In your opinion what is the state of health of the Bhutanese economy?

Finance Minister - As reported in the Kuensel issue dated 18th November 2013, Bhutanese economic growth has always been guided by the principle of sustainable and equitable development. This economic development principle has enabled the Government to create the conditions for broad based development ensuring that development benefits the majority. Recently, there is an economic uneasiness in the world, which started with the financial crisis in the US in 2008, sovereign debt crisis in the Euro zone, and excessive volatility of Indian Rupee.

Despite slowing growth trend of global economy, Bhutan has achieved a growth of 4.6% in 2012 which is third highest in the SAARC region. The global growth for 2012 was only 3.2% with many advanced economies showing zero growth or contraction. The IMF Article IV Consultations report 2011 rated Bhutan's economic performance as strong.

Although economy experienced temporary liquidity shortage in early 2012,

the situation has improved and now there is the excess liquidity in financial sector, which stood at Nu. 10.6 billion as of June 2013. It is important to note that the INR shortage and liquidity deficiency cannot be compared.

Nevertheless, government is cognizant of the issues and is trying to institute corrective measures to eventually minimize the issues like the rupee problem, liquidity crunch and restrictions. Given the limited options, the restrictions were imposed only on non-essential imports to minimize the pressure on external sector especially the balance of payment deficit with India. The administrative measures would be lifted as soon as fiscal measures are introduced.

How effective will the present government's Economic Stimulus Plan (ESP) be in resolving the prevailing issues in the market economy of the country? How do you see its performance in the five years?

Finance Minister - The Economic Stimulus plan will reinvigorate critical actors of the economy like the financial (credit) and the private sectors. ESP includes

plans to increase economic activities, enhance import substitution and generate employment in the economy. It will also improve cottage and small industries, which have huge potential to generate employment and provide sustainable economic base for both urban and rural population. As per the implementation strategy of the ESP recently approved by the Government, of Nu. 5 billion- ESP fund, Nu. 2.1 billion will be injected into the banks and non-bank financial institutions to increase liquidity for lending to the economically productive activities, a revolving fund of Nu. 1.9 billion will be established to support small and cottage industries and Nu. 1 billion will be used for special support schemes. We have already received Nu. 1 billion of the total fund.

ESP has been carefully devised. So, if everything goes as planned, it will help to spur economic growth and ease the rupee situation besides generating employment.

The first installment of the Nu.5 billion GoI grant was received in Rupees so it is believed that it will ease the Rupee situation in the local economy. What do you see happening after that on the

government's part to deal with issues that crop-up, how will it alter market dynamics since the market demand for Rupee is always big?

Finance Minister -The economy has to persistently carry on with the measures to improve rupee earnings. The ESP is also geared towards this. The government also recognizes that rupee outflow containment through import restrictions are not really sustainable solutions in the long run. Although Nu. 5 billion GoI grant in rupee would provide temporary respite to the rupee issue, unless economy improves structurally, the respite will be short and unsustainable. Given the current economic development stage and its trade relation with India, Bhutan will continue to need huge amounts of rupee, and it is likely that rupee shortage will persist for some more time. The government, on the other hand, will have to continue to improve the economy by putting in place both short-term and long-term economic measures. While continuing to invest in the hydropower, the country will also simultaneously harness its viable potentials, particularly, the tourism and agriculture sectors. In time, investment made on hydropower will start to pay off and the economy will be in comfortable position because the earnings from these hydropower projects will be in rupee. For now, the government is committed to pursuing appropriate measures to improve rupee earnings while also fixing the persisting problems and making long-term structural changes in the economy.

As far as favorable environments go, Bhutan always enjoyed the vital elements of political stability, near-to-perfect environmental conditions and rich natural resources. Why then

do you think Bhutan rates lower than countries like Nepal, Bangladesh in ease of doing business index?

Finance Minister - Bhutan's overall economic development is guided by the principle of the Gross National Happiness where socio-economic development has to be sustainable and equitable. In my opinion, our efforts to change and modernize have been cautious and judicious. When we endeavor to develop and change, we have to be careful and ensure that our overarching long-term socio-economic visions are not compromised. From a commercial business point of view, this effort of ours could have been 'notsoconducive' to start a business in the country. In essence, we cannot compromise long-term visions for our short-term economic gains.

Nevertheless, we should recognize our shortfalls and try to develop appropriate legislative and institutional instruments to make our country more attractive to business and investments. The government is committed to make Bhutan conducive for business.

To develop and promote private sector, access to information is critical. Recognizing this, the previous government had launched a G2B project, a portal designed for licensing simplification with technical support from IFC. Though the procedural aspect was simplified, the total time required to set up a business remained almost the same.

A World Bank report (World Development Report)in the past had suggested that rural-urban migration is a reality everywhere and for Bhutan too, so instead of trying to stop people from migrating, governments should allow it and just proceed to build more infrastructures in the urban areas instead of

trying to take services across difficult terrains wasting resources and money. What do you think?

Finance Minister - I think one has to see the situation and take contexts into consideration before agreeing or disagreeing with the suggestion. Rural-urban migration is a reality in Bhutan. But investing only in urban areas to accommodate migrating population will only exacerbate the problem.

Although expensive, efforts to bring balanced development across regions will control migration into the urban areas from the rural areas. Of course, the government should consider the cost of taking infrastructure to the rural areas vis-à-vis letting the migration happen without control. If the cities and towns are filled to the capacity, I think it would be wise to control migration by improving socio-economic conditions in the rural areas. The policy to develop only urban areas and neglect the rural areas would not cost government heavily but create disharmony in the society.

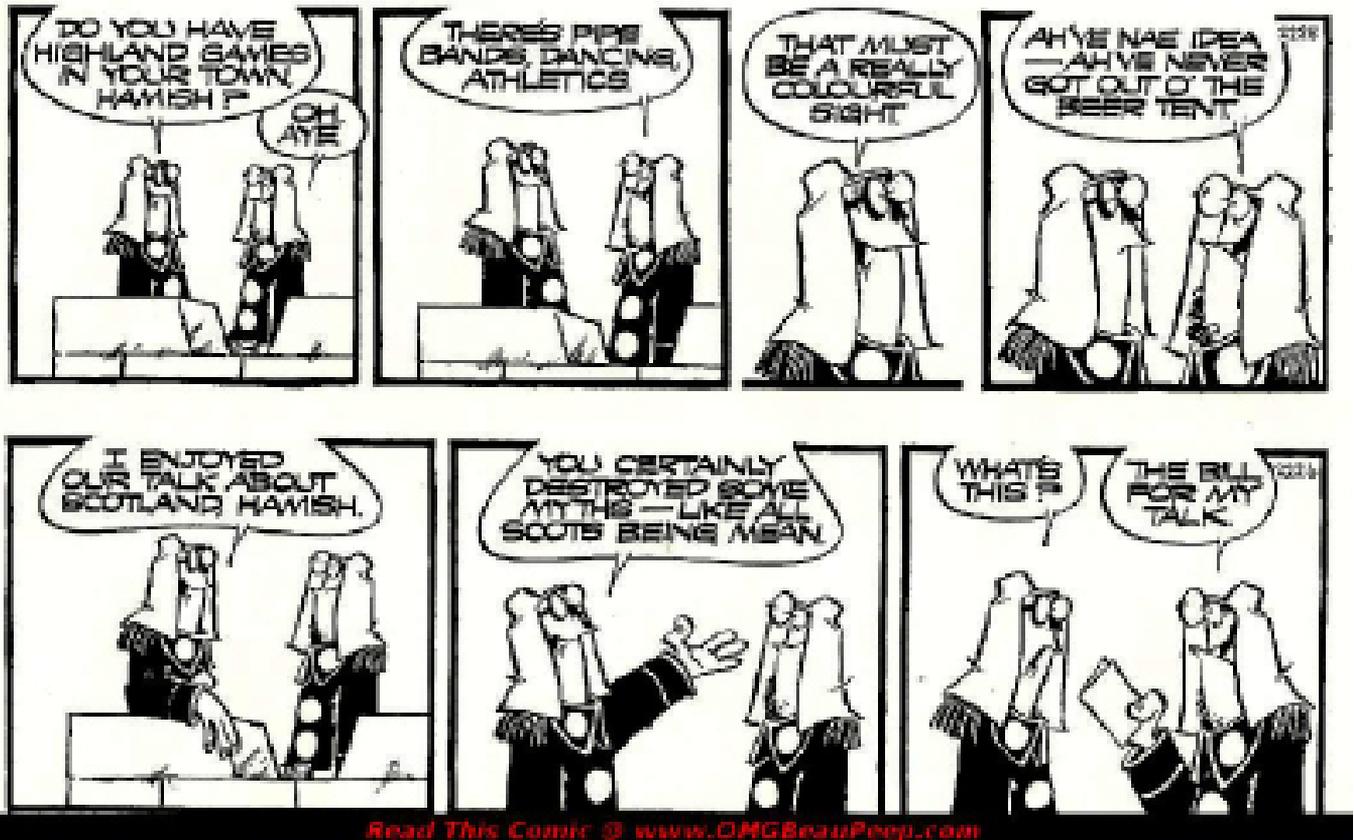
Therefore, one has to see the contexts. The government cannot stop rural-urban migration, but the only way to discourage it is to improve socio-economic opportunities in the rural areas.

Sonam Pelvar 

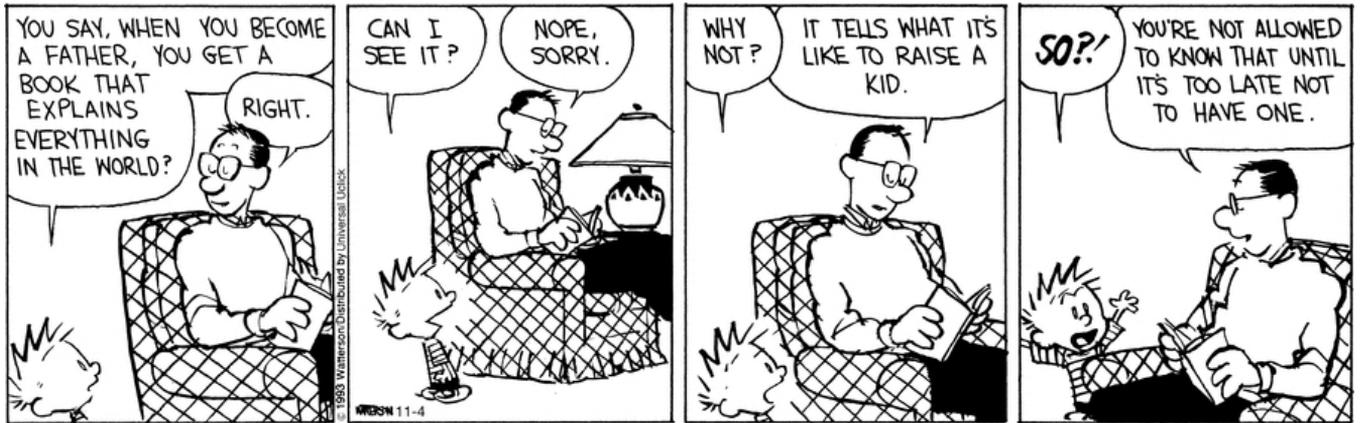
Beate Bealey



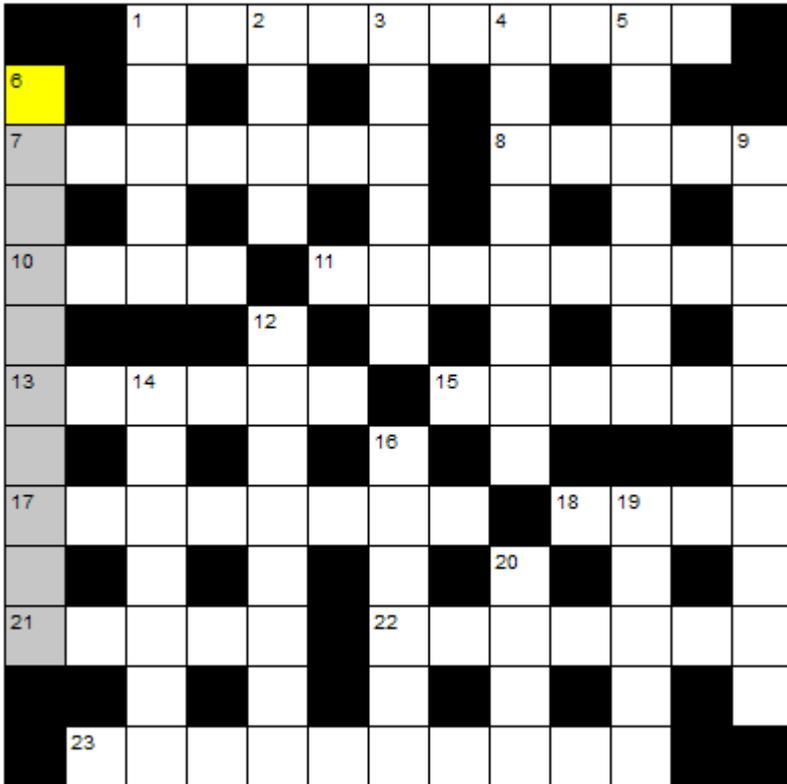
Beau Peep



Calvin & Hobbes



Cryptic Crossword



CRYPTIC CROSSWORD KEYS

Across

- 1. Clergyman has clay thrown out? Precisely! (10)
- 7. Sewing implements not quite unnecessary (7)
- 8. Carpenter is to go in without fish (5)
- 10. North-east race, after deductions (4)
- 11. I can roam about for pasta (8)
- 13. A group of directors on a ship (6)
- 15. A game with nets in? (6)
- 17. Meant to be at home, getting looked after (8)
- 18. Help with a Verdi opera (4)
- 21. Never-failing courage (5)
- 22. Make up your mind to do the puzzle again (7)
- 23. Agree to write (10)

Down

- 1. Proficient in a small department (5)
- 2. It's a little higher than the ankle - or a little lower! (4)
- 3. A little mischief-maker, a scallywag, a rogue (6)
- 4. Green tea brewed for a youngster (8)
- 5. Not lewd, wild or disappointed (3,4)
- 6. Swirling in and out in flood (10)
- 9. Part of the harness said to be put back (10)
- 12. Magnificence makes Edgar run (8)
- 14. Part of Canada - and parts of Iran too! (7)
- 16. Thirteen cards for eleven players in Scotland? (6)
- 19. I had been first but didn't work (5)
- 20. Norwegian capital in Czechoslovakia (4)



MOST DISCUSSED

Vegetable exports doubled this year at Bhutan exporting 1,563 Metric tonnes of vegetables from January to August this year. The exports earned more than Nu 24M. The goal of the 11th FYP is to halve what comes in and triple what goes out.



First by-election to the National Assembly in the country saw Dechen Zangmo, a young businesswoman as the winner from Nanong-Shumar constituency representing DPT. Pema Wangchuk was the contending candidate representing PDP. The seat from Nanong-Shumar constituency remains unchanged because DPT's Dechen Zangmo retains the seat.

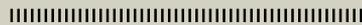


Government says 74% of the 100 day pledges fulfilled. The Opposition claims that it is only 26% fulfilled and not 74% fulfilled.



Nu 2B FOR 205

Nu 2M grants have been endorsed to all 205 Gewogs (cantons) in Bhutan for the 2013 – 2014 Fiscal year.



20%

Legislation has been drafted with 20% quota for reservation of seat for women in the Parliament.



2

Indian Tourist died from drowning during their visit to Mebartsho on October 30th. The two tourists were unguided.



95%

Target to electrify 43,951 households by the end of the 10th FYP, according to the Department of Renewable Energy officials will be met. The latest figure shows 41,753 households electrified as of now.



3

Three men have been detained by the Thimphu Police in connection with the murder of an Indian National on November 7.



20kg+ or Nu 15,750?

Druk air for the first time advertised an airfare of Nu 15,750, exclusive of taxes, for a single round trip to Bangkok, one of its lowest ever air fares for the Paro-Bangkok sector, this winter. The discount have come about in respect to the other competitors offer of 20 Kg of extra free excess baggage allowance and a round trip to Bangkok at Nu 15,999.



1 AND 3

Police in Gasa have arrested a 33-year old man for poaching musk deer on the night of November 7, and three men are on the run.



7 serious men

A Pay Commission comprising of 7 members has been established. This is one of the 100day pledges of PDP. The Pay Commission will look into the revision of pay scale and salary.



LAST WORD

So it seems the Economic Stimulus Plan (ESP) is the touted savior for the Bhutanese economy currently wrangling with the remains of the Rupee problem, liquidity crunch and restrictions in operation brought about by the said problems.

Well it is true, to certain extent that is, if the musings of some thinkers, planners and policy makers are to be taken into account. From what has been said it will come to pass that the generous ESP money of Nu 5bn will solve the liquidity crunch but it will not address the Rupee problem in its entirety.

This is being said because the first installment of the GoI grant money for the ESP was received in Rupees hence it is supposed to ease the problem to a degree. This particular statement receives credibility because when banks start giving loans; it will result in additional pressure on the demand for Rupee, hence exacerbating the Rupee problem while only temporarily solving the liquidity crunch.

The embattled market which already has a huge demand for the Indian currency will spin into motion a buying spree of machinery, automobiles and construction materials etc. furthering demand on the Rupee.

The two market activities of housing and import of cars are highlighted in this as market activities that will drain the economy yet again of available Rupee currency. The many constructions of houses will involve import of construction materials, buying of machinery etc. which involves great expenditure of Rupees. While the importing of cars would involve huge loans being taken by buyers which directly translate into Rupee outflows.

And while on the topic people are not oblivious of the green tax which has been put in place, dubiously hinting that consumers can start consuming if they are able to shell out the taxes existent ban on import of cars while. However the import ban on vehicles remains in place negating the purpose of green tax.

It was understood that the tax was supposed to act as a deterrent to reduce consumption but imports would be allowed. Car imports are still banned, therefore the green tax has no relevance.

At this point it is established that the stimulus plan will ease prevailing situations in the economy serving a short-term relief but supplementing and more effective measure are being prescribed to haul in the actions that will ensure a more permanent state of calm.

Savings, figure big and bold among the suggested measures to follow a path that lays emphasis on import substitution and export-oriented activities. It is also been said that restrictions currently in place are good as temporary measures to limit consumption but would prove costly if pursued for a longer period.

However, decision makers at executive levels say government would certainly lift the restrictions but would choose to do it wisely in a phased manner since the immediate lifting of restrictions is not advisable in prevailing unstable market conditions.

The government would eventually aim to promote investments but in areas that generate good returns, reduce consumption and promote savings. Experts also suggest that there should be reform on the restrictions because people will after a period of time try and find ways and means to surpass such restrictions leading to more and more illegal activities. In such cases the revenue generated will not reach the government as a result of manipulations, tax-evasion, etc.

Sonam Pelvar 🐦