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Every Voice Matters

Bhutan's Democracy

Five Years On- Taking Stock



■ Dorji Wangchuk

In March 2008, we voted in the Druk Phuensum Tshogpa (DPT) Government, thus embarking on a historical journey. The last five years were an opportunity for us to consolidate our achievements, embed the principles of democracy firmly within our society, and build a strong foundation for future

success.

As we look forward to the 2013 elections, this is the right time to ask: Have we achieved the right results in our democratic transition? Are there any lessons to learn? What challenges do we still face as a nation?

The Government has impressed many with how they have managed the transition. They have rightly preserved the approach that

our Fourth Druk Gyalpo put in place, with no major restructuring of the Government, and a focus on Gross National Happiness.

Initial concerns about our readiness for political change have proven unfounded. Bhutanese have taken to democracy very well, and they recognise that participation in the political process is very important, because of the small size of the country, and the impact on us of every decision of the Government.

It has passed many laws and undertaken programmes to reduce poverty and improve service delivery. The Civil Society sector is now functioning. Both the Government and the Opposition have engaged the citizens effectively in many public discussions.

Our economy grew at around 7%. There was evidence of an economic strategy. We saw a significant move towards liberalising the economy through Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and diversification into areas other than hydroelectricity. The private sector, whilst developing, continued to be subsidised by the Government in certain areas. The concept of GNH has also gone global in the past five years.

However, there have also been setbacks and challenges.

Many people found that Members of

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To Agree to Disagree For a Healthy Democracy

■ Siok Sian Pek Dorji

If there is one lesson democracy has taught us since 2008, it is that the world's most popular form of government creates tension, conflict and even adversity. Bhutan's experiment with democratic change resulted in tension, wrangling, and dissent within families, communities, the institutions of government, and the population at large.

The past five years were marked by stories of post-election trauma, often more painful at the personal than the political level. At a brainstorming session on political change that the Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy conducted in September 2012, a former party member described how she felt after her party

lost the elections:

“We felt like we were outcasts from society; few people spoke to us once the elected government came into power.” Several others felt this way shared this view.

A Japanese PhD student conducting research in the Merak Sakteng region noted that families in this remote part of the country were still split by their political affiliations, and it was taking a long time for rural people to overcome their political differences.

We are beginning to understand that the culture of democracy and party politics everywhere is characterised by conflict and disagreement. We cannot wish away these ten-

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Feminisation of Politics & Leader- ship in Bhutan

■ Ugyen Lhamo

As a woman, whenever I advocate women's rights and the need for more women leaders in society, I would receive very negative comments, especially from male counterparts. They point at all the worst women leaders in history. They argue that males are equally capable of empathy and compassion, and that females are not necessarily better.

Both males and females had roles to play

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Let Young Voices be Heard

■ Tashi Tshomo, Trainee, RIM

More than 60% of the population of Bhutan are youths, yet their voices are hardly heard. True, the media have always portrayed the problems of youths, reporting complaints and criticisms against them by teachers, parents and society in general. However, have the youths themselves been given enough platforms to discuss their problems and offer solutions? Upon critical analysis, the answer would have to be “no”.

To make good decisions, we need experience, qualification and maturity. Our elders would say that we, the youths, are incapable of making decisions and participating in them. Thus, there have been very few opportunities for young people to speak out, and even when the opportunity arises, they have been reluctant to express themselves. The reasons are, firstly, our society is hierarchical, respecting decisions taken by elders, and secondly, there is a very poor culture of voicing opinions and sharing thoughts. Besides, there is a huge syllabus to be covered



in schools, leaving little time for discussion, and sharing becomes difficult. Rural youths are also too shy to speak out.

Thus, Bhutan needs more forums focused on youths, apart from the different websites available, where people just pour out their frustrations in urban and rural areas. We need more encouragement from the

family and the schools. The elders need to listen more to our young people.

It's important for Bhutanese youths to have healthy debates and discussion forums, especially since Bhutan has made its transition towards democracy. Our democratic society needs the opinions of more than half of its population.

Educating for Citizenship

■ Ugyen Kelzang
Teacher, Jigme Sherubling High School

I would like to share my thoughts on “Educating for Citizenship” from my Bhutanese perspective. When we think of our country and of being a citizen, we often think of the great words of John F. Kennedy: “Ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country.”

So how do the youths know what they can do for their country? The philosophy

and belief behind educating for citizenship are vital, particularly now, when Bhutan is experiencing such a historic change with democracy. The youths are bombarded with so many controversial news, opposing opinions and loud views, a position so different from previous times, that I believe it is more important than ever to guide them. They are exposed to so much information that is sometimes not verified, and often is very crude. We need to intervene before the young feel that it is okay to keep experiencing

these controversies and oppositions. I believe Bhutan has an advantage to change now, for not only are we being exposed to unrestricted media, but we are also well aware of the history of how media has helped or harmed people, countries, and systems. We cannot just close our eyes and ears to media, because it is unstoppable, and it will find its way in. So it is best for ourselves and for our youths to prepare them to consume it, verify it, and learn to choose how to let it affect us.



BCMD welcomes to you our third volume of Mi-khung.

The 12 paged newsletter share stories about media and democracy in Bhutan. It also gives you a platform to share your views and opinions on how to build a strong foundation for a vibrant democracy.

All articles and stories in this newsletter are views and

opinions of the writers.

BCMD welcomes articles submitted by readers. Most articles run about 300- 500 words. We welcome submissions that are relevant to BCMD's mission of contributing to the development of a culture of democracy. If interested, please send in your contribution to bcmd@bcmbd.bt

For more information call 327903. Follow us on Facebook.

Dharma and Democracy

Mi-khung talks to Bob Thurman, Professor of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Studies at Columbia University, on Dharma and Democracy

■ BCMD Staff Reporter

Q: Democracy is said to promote human freedom. Please explain democracy from a Buddhist perspective.

The Buddhist principle is to get along with whatever form of government, with benign monarchy perhaps being the most natural one for human beings. However, if we follow the teaching given in the Aggannya Sutta (Pali), the King or Queen is considered chosen by the people, called “Mahasammata” (the “Great Elected One”), because people select him as a strong and just person able to protect them all from each other. He is not chosen by “God”, with a divine right to punish people, as in the pre-Buddhist idea of kingship as shown in the Shantiparvan of the Mahabharata. Thus, democracy means rule by the people, in that in principle, all human beings are able eventually to become buddhas, all are equally worthy in principle, the lives of all are equally valued, and so on. Functional differences are always there, of course, and this inevitably result in some sort of stratification in society, but such differences and the hierarchies that emerge are only functional and not inscribed in genes, etc., as in ascribed caste systems.

A last point: In the structuring of the monastic Sangha, decisions were made by consensus, which meant that it was not a majority vote. Rather, deliberations were continued until every member could not reasonably withhold assent from a given decision, to avoid developing schisms in the community from leaving disaffected minorities behind. This would be a good idea in modern democracies, to ensure the continued engagement of a loyal opposition, essential for good government, but perhaps it would be terribly unwieldy if insisted upon in all things. However, the Sangha was organised in a fully democratic way, unlike the monarchical organisation of the lay societies in which Buddhism flourished. So this is a hint from Buddhist history that democracy is ultimately the best system.

We all know Winston Churchill’s famous saying, “Democracy is the worst possible form of government - except for all the others!”

2. What is Nagajurna’s advice to leaders? What is their role as leaders, including the leaders of a democracy?

Much advice is given in various books, like the Jewel Rosary (Ratnamala or Ratnavali, Rinchen ‘Phreng ba) and others. Perhaps the most startling advice has to do with the duty of the King to always put his own practice of the Dharma first. In my book, Inner Revolution, I boil down the advice given to leaders (taken from Nagarjuna and from Ashoka before him) into five principles:

1) transcendent individualism: Each person must live according to Dharmic ethic and education, as their own evolutionary development is the most important thing first of all;

2) nonviolence, as human life is so precious for the person who has achieved it, it must not be wasted in wars or other misuses;

3) “educationalism”, since the purpose of life is the travelling of the eightfold noble path of the three higher educations, in ethics, meditation, and wisdom. I had to coin that word, “educationalism”, since “modern” people think education is only preparation for life and the purpose of life is work, whereas, according to Buddhist biological theory (karma), work may be necessary to sustain life, but the purpose of life is actually the higher education of one’s own enlightened qualities of wisdom, self-control, compassion, skill in liberative arts, and so on;

4) social altruism, since to develop oneself and to assist others in developing themselves, altruistic love and compassion (the spirit of the bodhisattva) and acts motivated by them are essential; and

5) democratism, in that all people are in principle equal as to potential and value, and so structures of government and society should allow maximum possible mobility for all citizens, though paradoxically, sometimes a strong, compassionate and benevolent executive (i.e. good King) is the best guarantor

of the equality of all citizens. Of course, a bad king is the worst possible oppressor, hence the tendency towards democratic revolutions in recent centuries, though the danger of oppressive dictatorships arising from these revolutions is also huge, as we can see all around.

3. What does the Dharma tell us about the role and responsibility of a citizen in a democracy?

This question is already addressed above in Nagajurna’s advice, except for the last comment on democratism, which is specific to leaders.

4. Any comments about the role of media in promoting a GNH democracy?

Free speech is absolutely necessary, and the role of the media, “the Fourth Estate”, is essential to critically examine the works of leaders and citizens, to avoid corruption and so on. Of course, the journalist also has a responsibility to restrain bias, report all sides of a question, give reasons for opinions, and so on. In America, the Reaganite abolition of the “fairness doctrine” very much led to the “propagandisation” of media, which has led to a dangerous polarisation of society and a great deal of confusion about the world in people’s minds.

In a television-saturated country, also, there must be a strong element of public, non-commercial television programming, providing people with unfiltered information and examination of critical issues. The educational responsibility of such powerful thought-influencing media must always be highlighted. One would not allow propaganda in a classroom in a public school; so one should not allow propaganda in television, which creates a huge classroom in many people’s homes. Thus advertising has to be strictly monitored. In America today the ratio of public relations professionals to journalists is something like 4 to 1, which has led to excessive corporation influence over public opinion and the widespread dissemination of misinformation.

4

Tips on Media Literacy

Tips for Engaging Online

Tip # 1

Protect your Reputation and Privacy

Your personal information has a lot of value to those who want to misuse it, so guard it carefully. This includes your first and last name, phone number, home and email address, age, school, passwords, and photos, and even feelings, especially those of loneliness and sadness. Sexual predators tend to target emotionally vulnerable users, and may try to take advantage of you through false reassurance.

Tip # 2

Demonstrate Maturity

Use the Internet responsibly, and do not be hurtful to anyone. Never say anything to anyone online that you would not say to his or her face. Do not log on to a friend's computer or online accounts to do harm or pretend to be them. Also, do not share personal details of friends and family members online without their permission. Be mindful of how much media you consume and balance it with other activities in your life.

Tip # 3

Think First

Know that everything you read or see on the Internet is not always true. Think about whether or not a source/person is credible. You should recognise that your safety and well-being, and that of your friends and family, are more important than anything else.

Tip # 4

Beware of Cyber-bullies

Cyber-bullying is the use of modern communication technologies to embarrass, humiliate, threaten, or intimidate an individual, to gain power and control over them. The effects of cyber-bullying are not limited to hurt feelings. Research suggests that victims of cyber-bullying respond much like traditional bullying victims in terms of negative emotions, such as feeling sad, anxious, and having lower self-esteem. If you are being cyber-bullied, block and do not respond to the bully, and contact an adult.

Social Media Guidelines for the Election Period

1. Every user of the Social Media shall have the responsibility to carry out oversight duty and report to the election authorities any violation of the laws, in particular the Election Code of Conduct, by a Political Party, Candidate, Voter, media, electoral officer or worker of a Political Party.

2. Every Candidate and Political Party shall be required to submit to the Election Commission, the addresses/links of the Social Media being used for an election campaign.

3. The addresses/links of the Social Media being used for an election campaign shall be submitted through the concerned Returning Officer at the time of filing the Letter of Intent/ Nominations.

4. No individual shall communicate/transmit/post hate messages or any content with intent to defame or reduce the electoral chances of an opposing contestant or Political Party.
5. The Election Commission shall, though users of Social Media are expected to self-regulate against abuse for narrow political objectives and gains and/or file a complaint along with evidence, monitor to see that Electoral Laws are not violated.

6. A distinction shall be drawn to differentiate between an anonymous letter, postal or hand mail, and that of a matter on Social Media using fake or anonymous identity, as the latter has more reach and can be traced to a reasonable extent to merit investigation.

7. The ECB shall establish contact with popular and widespread international Social Media companies to seek support during an election, in not allowing persons to use the forum or communicate contents which are in violation of the Electoral Laws.

Source: www.election-bhutan.org.bt

Middle School Students learn about Media:

Gaupel Media Club (GMC)

■ Binod Raika, Teacher,
Gaupel Lower Secondary
School

Gaupel Media Club(GMC) was set up in 2012 to help students develop the skill to analyse different forms of modern communication, so they can become wise consumers of media. The club started with 20 members, ranging from sixth to eighth grade. The club officers and the club fa-

cilitators meet four times a year to track the progress of club activities.

Club Coordinator:
Binod Raika

Objectives:

- To develop among students an understanding of the effects of mass media on themselves as individuals and also upon society.
- To strengthen analytical skills through media.
 - To encourage students to express their feelings and thoughts through the media messages they produce.
 - To develop skills to encourage the production of creative media messages.
 - To develop skills to deconstruct media messages by making them un-

derstand the constructed nature of media.

- To engage them in cooperative tasks.

Principles:

- Active participation
- Regular attendance of meetings
- Respect of the club's basics
- Cooperation
- Contribution

Structure of the Club:

The Club has a governing council which plans and executes the activities of the club. Members of the governing council include:

- Club Facilitators: - Two Teachers
- Club officers: Two students

Activities:

- Film reviews and discussion
- Producing school Media Literacy Pamphlet.
- Creating awareness through creative media in the



Educating for citizenship

school/community.

- Creating awareness in the school by arranging debates on different issues highlighted in the media.
- Writing School news report/ Articles.
- Making of School media news bulletin board.
- Making documentaries & screening them.
- Attending field trips.
- Attending and taping school and community events.
- Interacting with guest speakers.
- Video recording.
- Expression through pictures; capturing scenes and events through camera.



Take a shot at Photography

■ Dawa, 3rd year student, PCE

BCMD has successfully conducted its sixth media nomads camp on the theme "Stories that Inspire Change". I was motivated and inspired by Yeshey Dorji, a photographer for 30 years and a professional photographer for 10. The participants were captivated by his presentation, an art form through which people can describe untold stories, nostalgic events and sometimes, even hurtful stories, which affects the heart, emotionally and physically. I am among those people who are passionate about be-

coming a photographer, always admiring of and enthusiastic to see each other's work. Yeshey Dorji answered all the questions of the eager participants fully, further inspiring and strengthening their desire to make this their career. Human emotions may change like a caterpillar turning into a butterfly, but a photo captures the moment for eternity. Photography is not only about images, but it is the art of memories, to be cherished. A photographer needs a mind that is patient and tolerant, and he or she also has to be humble and determined.

The art of photography is



difficult, yet it can be pursued with a patient heart, and it can tantalise any individual who is

committed to work in the profession.

"Be a photographer."

Bhutan's Democracy Five Years On - Taking Stock

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Parliament (MPs) were wanting in more active participation. Most of our MPs have been largely absent from important discussions, and their level of interaction with their constituents is suspect. A question certainly remains over how much they have helped further the idea of democracy outside of Thimphu.

This year, there will likely be a clear preference for a party that talks about the ground realities, and the immediate needs of Bhutan outside of Thimphu. The young Bhutanese will also be a crucial group to engage with. Our voters will have come of age and are not likely to be easily swayed by any educated member of the family. A key challenge for parties is in differentiating themselves from others in terms of their political ideologies.

Contrary to democratic principles, the Government failed to consult the people on a number of policies and economic decisions (e.g. pedestrian day, vegetable ban, etc). People desired, deserved and had the right to be

consulted, especially since these impacted on their lives directly.

Our debt problems and youth unemployment remain the major economic challenges. Our current debt-to-GDP ratio is 78% and is expected to increase to 112% in 2014/15. The youth unemployment figure of 7.3% is dismal for a country growing between 7-12% annually.

We need to do more to ensure growth of the private sector without wealth transfer from the public, to manage the risk of creating oligarchies, to maintain corruption-free economic development and to reduce inequality. Many of our leaders, unfortunately, failed to provide a credible vision for Bhutan's economic future.

We also face the immediate and serious challenge of alleged corruption around leaders within the Government, the private sector, and within politics. These allegations have eroded our confidence in people we deemed leaders. We risk providing a perception of success founded on behaviours and practices which are clearly wrong and corrupt.

As we increasingly focus on GNH, we must also ensure that GNH does not put imaginary boundaries around our thinking, limit how we see things or evidence, and blind us to possibilities. GNH risks becoming a "Procrustean bed", with the Government trying to fit everything within GNH, conversations being driven by GNH and outsiders judging Bhutan through the lens of GNH.

For a common vision to overcome the challenges we face and to secure our economic and political future, it is essential that we ask the right questions: about our politics in Thimphu, our economic and social policies, and the way in which we pursue GNH.

The upcoming election is the right time to ask, and to clarify any questions we have.

A summary of a talk presented at the Bhutan UK Society.

Dorji Wangchuk is a Financial Services professional based in London, UK. He previously worked for the Government as an engineer.

Feminisation of Politics & Leadership in Bhutan

>> From pg. 1

in the evolution of human beings. Men were the hunters, tool-makers, protectors, etc., while women nurtured their children, cooked, cleaned and took care of the family.

Men were always involved in more brutal actions, such as wars, because of their need to defend their communities. So I strongly believe that, as much as the patriarchal system looked down on the capabilities of women, it also enabled women to grow more nurturing, emotional and caring, because they had no need to be violent; it was not our role.

It is true that every individual needs to be judged by his or her character, but women have yet to be given a platform to showcase our capabilities. We have to remember that the social system has been built by men; they made the rules of the game. If women are to succeed in a male-dominated society, only those possessing the characteristics of a male can become successful.

Therefore, I strongly support at least equal representation of women (if not more) in leadership roles, not because we want to dominate the game, but because it is time to change the rules of the game. We need a good number of women leaders to change the rules.

We talk about moral values and compassion, but looking at the world today, it is becoming harder and harder each day to be humane. Everyone is competing for resources. Capitalism and greed are increasing, and society has for so long been facing a crisis of conscience.

I believe that good women, if given a chance, can trigger tremendous changes within society. Women have always been held at higher esteem in terms of character, but we face many double standards. For example, if a male misbehaves, it is seen as normal. We say, "aahhh...phoja butshu mey". If a woman misbehaves, she faces much social stigma.

At the end of the day, we women should realise that these double standards are applied not just by society, but even by ourselves.

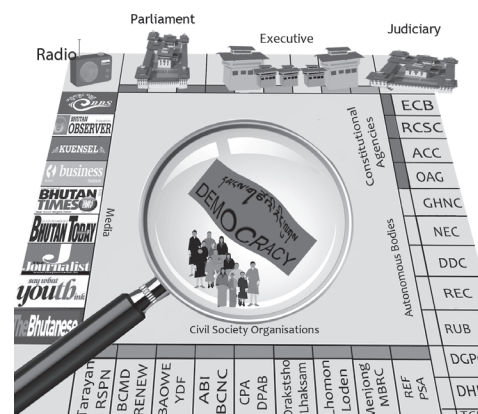
Mankind has always expected more from women, because deep inside, we all know there is an intrinsic difference between the role of a nurturer and that of a protector. Even I apply these double standards to my female friends, as well as to myself. I am prejudiced, but it is such a natural feeling for me to want a woman to retain her timeless role - strong, compassionate, open, warm and friendly.

Billions of good mothers have given birth and nurtured billions of children, but today, it

is time for mothers to nurture not just their family, but their whole community. There is a superwoman inside each of us; we just have not been given the chance to save the world... yet.

"The Buddhist concept of democracy has to be based on two things: wisdom and method. In Buddhism, we put so much value on dependent arising; nothing can stand independently. Everything is dependent. This wisdom is so important to develop a Buddhist democracy. The second aspect is compassion - putting your feet in the shoes of someone else. Put together, we develop a Buddhist democracy."

Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche



Elections 2013

With the upcoming elections, citizens are getting ready to vote again. Know your candidates for the National Council and National Assembly elections and the political party they are affiliated with. Check out what our media is doing in keeping the citizens informed. Check out on these media sites.

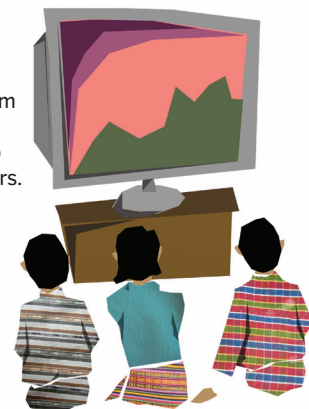
1. Online resources

1. Kuenselonline www.kuenselonline.com
Know your NA Candidates
NC Aspirants
2. The Bhutanese Website www.thebhutanese.bt
Democracy in Action (Stories/ articles on Candidates, political parties, ECB rules)
3. BBS www.bbs.com.bt
2013 Parliamentary Elections (NA Candidates and aspiring NC Candidates)
4. Bhutan Observer Website www.bhutanobserver.bt
Elections 2013 (Stories on candidates, political parties, etc.)



2. Television and Print Resources

1. BBS TV
Dawai Kudroen, Every Wednesday, 9:30 p.m
Anchor Dawa sits face-to-face with news makers. Guests include prime ministers to business executives and community leaders.
2. Bhutan Times Paper
Check out "Profile stories on Candidates" every Sunday



Get to know your political parties



To Agree to Disagree For a Healthy Democracy

>> From pg. 1

sions, as they are all a part of the experiment we call democracy, but we can learn how to deal with the clash of views in our small society – how to agree to disagree.

The tension that came with our democracy was serious enough for our leaders to remind us that our small country could not afford to let conflict tear us apart. The experience in many other societies showed that negativity and differences could deprive us of the common future that we seek.

His Majesty the King, speaking to politicians and officials at the local and the national levels, has been encouraging them to ensure that the “elections do not create divisions among the people, and that communities continue to live together in harmony”. In his public addresses, His Majesty has encouraged all citizens to take part in the electoral process and make democracy a success.

The Prime Minister has emphasised family values nation-wide, that ties are important, and “must be preserved no matter what happens in the upcoming elections”.

How do we go about building a Bhutanese

democracy? How do we take on the responsibility of being effective citizens of a democracy? How do we refrain from mudslinging?

Election rules require civil servants and members of civil society to be “apolitical”, and the ECB has issued guidelines to ensure “free and fair” elections. But there are fundamental misconceptions at all levels of society about democracy. There are civil servants who avoid being seen talking to politicians. Some people believe that even political conversation makes a person “political”, thus contradicting the notion of responsible free speech.

Now that Bhutan has set up democratic institutions and processes, our next step is to focus on ways to deepen democratic culture, including the rights and responsibilities of free speech – being able to speak openly and without hesitation or fear, based on evidence not conjecture. Citizens need access to social institutions and public space to share their views, criticisms and dreams.

Bhutanese people, as individuals, are known to be open, confident, and creative; qualities that encourage democratic living. We do not have inbuilt obstacles to democracy, like the caste system. We have legacies, like

the hierarchical values, that did not encourage the questioning of authority.

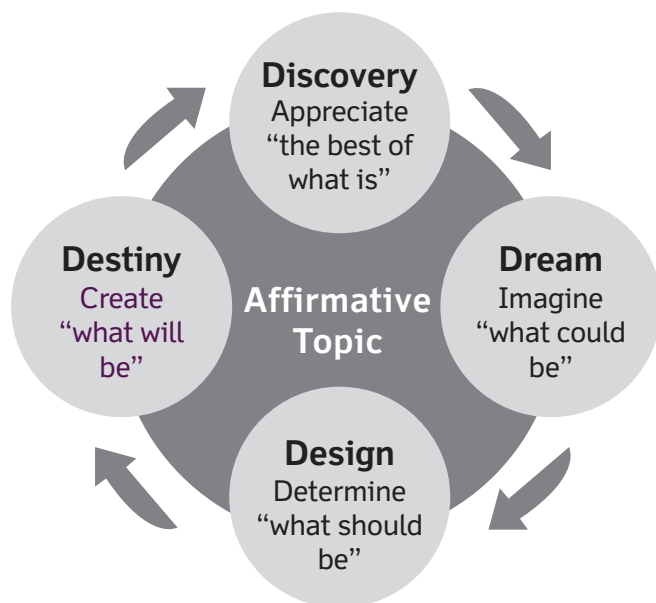
We also have the unique advantage of having being granted democracy from the “top down” and, with it, the freedom to challenge existing norms.

For a culture of real democracy to evolve, we have to welcome and take part in robust debates, reasoned arguments, and even heated disagreements. That is all a part of the democratic experience. But we also have to embrace the true spirit of democracy and not be burdened by negativity; we need to be critical but not cynical.

As we talk about openness, public space, debate and discourse and constructive criticism, we know our media has a critical role to strengthen harmony, that makes them conscious of not creating divisions in society, of not taking sides and splitting families and the community.

Differences and diversity are the strengths of a democracy, and political systems that survive best are those that keep their critics in dialogue. Transparent and open discourse – vigorous and healthy – helps us define and reach a common good.

Appreciative Inquiry Workshop



Appreciative Inquiry Model

When: October 22-23, 2012

Where: WWF Conference Hall, Thimphu

Participants: 18 participants from the Anti-Corruption Commission, the Royal Of-

fice for Media, the Royal Education Council, the Election Commission, the Ministry of Education, the Menjong Foundation, Tarayana Foundation, Youth Development Fund, GNH Commission, the Bhutan Kidney Foundation, ChigPhen Rigpey Association, Kuensel, Bhutan Times, Bhutan Observer and Ramchetshekha Community Primary School participated in the event.

Outcome: The Appreciative Inquiry model is based on the belief that if there are more opportunities to use individual and collective strengths at work, there is more active citizen engagement and higher generative capacity, thus leading to higher performance as an individual, a group unit, an organisation, a society, etc.

This workshop taught participants how to frame their inquiries, to ask their questions in such ways that there is a focus on when a system was the most effective when trying to solve a problem. It gave participants a thorough understanding of how Appreciative Inquiry is very relevant with GNH, and how we can apply it in our daily lives be it at work or at home.

"It resulted in a shift of thinking because my natural instinct would have been to look at all the problems and try to 'fix' them, but I learnt that it is important to keep a positive frame of mind to be really creative." – Dipika Chettri, Royal Office of Media

"...reframing problem statements into a positive statements. I feel it is important because when issues are framed properly in a positive way, the issues can be addressed better and therefore generate positive responses!" – Kaka Choden, Ministry of Education

Youth Forum: Igniting the Next Generation of Active Citizens.



Envisioning a green future for Bhutan. Youth share their views at a forum

When: November 23, 2012

Where: Hotel Phuntsho Pelri, Thimphu

Participants: 87 participants from Bhutan Observer, the Bhutan Youth Founda-

tion, Chithuen Phenday Association, Druk Chirwang Tshogpa, Druk Merer Nazhoen Tshogpa, the Election Commission, GNH Centre, the Ministry of Labour, the National

Council, Paro College of Education, Rigsum, the Royal Education Council, RTC, Young Leaders, the Youth Development Fund, and other miscellaneous agencies attended the workshop.

Outcome: Based on the Appreciative Inquiry model, this workshop provided participants a platform to voice their opinions and their concerns. This open dialogue helped to create networks among the participants who came from diverse backgrounds; the employed and the unemployed, students and graduates, politicians and advocates, etc. Participants felt that their views were listened to by other participants. Evaluations strongly indicated that participants felt equipped to perform their roles as active citizens and make positive contributions to their communities; they also recommended hosting similar forums in the future.

"As a citizen, it's high time we think about what else we can do to take the country forward. We have to build citizenship by instilling values through education. Education is the answer to many social issues, and we can do this by curbing the curriculum."

Tashi Lhamo, Royal Education Council

Media Nomads VI: Storytelling that Inspiring Change.



Learning to be a reporter: Citizen Journalism for youth

When: December 18-25

Where: BCMD Media Lab, YDF

Participants: 34 students from Loselling MSS, Jigme Sherubling HS, LMSS, YHSS, Institute of Language and Cultural Studies (Taktse), Paro College of Education, Samtse

College of Education, and Sherubtse College participated in the 8 day workshop.

Outcome: The sixth Media Nomads camp focused on media literacy, citizen journalism, social media, photography, storytelling and creating content using different media.

The workshop aimed to give participants a clear understanding of the core concepts of media literacy, their constitutional rights and responsibilities and the ethical guidelines associated with storytelling and journalism. Participants learnt the necessary skills associated with conducting interviews, writing hard and soft news, storyboarding, visual and digital storytelling, voicing opinions in respectful and culturally appropriate ways and using social media in responsible and useful ways to advocate positive change.

"You try to make sense of other peoples' stories through your own experiences, but you also want it to be true to the other person"

- Yugel Keshor Pakural

"Before I was really media shy, as soon as I saw anyone from BBS or the media I would run away but now I think it's important to participate, to be more open to media & Journalism, it's the only way Democracy can function well. Now I have more self confidence and am more vocal, I am more media literate now."

- Karma Chuki, Samtse College of Education

Curriculum Development and Teacher Training: Educating for Citizenship.



Teachers discuss media literacy curricula with Stonybrook University professor

When: January 7-10, 2013

Where: Hotel Holiday Home, Paro

Participants: 26 teachers from Doten LSS, Gauphel LSS, Hongtsho CPS, Jigme Losel

PS, Jigme Sherubling HS, Khangkhu MSS, Kuzhugchen MSS, Loselling MSS, the Paro College of Education, Ramchetsekha CPS, Rinchen Kuenphen PS, Shaba PS, Sisina PS,

and Woochu LSS participated in the workshop.

Outcome: Teachers designed and produced 11 lesson plans which were featured in the post-workshop curricula publication. They also engaged in a fruitful panel discussion with the director of the Royal Education Council, Dr. Sonam Wangyel, about the importance of educating future citizens and initiatives underway to bring democracy into classrooms. Teachers from all schools also expressed interest in starting Media Clubs and/or integrating the lessons and activities in their classrooms. Teachers realised their role in guiding the development of "citizens".

"There is a lot of concern about how children are being bombarded with information from TV, the internet, etc. So we hope to teach children how to properly, mindfully, and responsibly consume all this information"

- Professor Miller, Resource Person, Stony Brook University

"When you vote, it's not not clear what you think; but if you speak out and exercise your freedom of speech, it's not as black and white, and helps us clarify our understanding."

Phub Dem, Teacher, Shaba Primary School



Have a view?
Share it on www.bhutanspeaks.bt.
Come online and see what other people have to share.

**Why the emergence of teen suicide?
What can we do as a community?**

“Living GNH in practice is the way, which takes care of psychological well-being (through medication, prayers and contemplation). Children and youth must be given opportunity to contemplate and soul search why are they born on earth, what are they suppose to do, where would they find their happiness and should not be forced to do something that they do not like or enjoy doing. Counselling becomes an urgent matter in schools through value education – talking to youth what is life and what is expected of it – there should be more parental education. Children and youth must be equipped with mind that takes life as life should.”



Dr. Saamdu Chetri

The Potential of Broadcasting in Bhutan

“Instead of working upon new alternatives to the BBS tv, I was wondering if people could work upon improving the quality of the BBS tv channel that we already have. It is already very encouraging to see innovative programs coming on BBS targeting families with interesting programs, kids with educational programs and also travel shows! So may be we could include more innovative ideas and work for extending the no. of hours of it’s telecast. This should allow for job opportunities for a number of creative units taking care of the quality and the presentation of the programs too. What would my fellow citizens say?”



Ugyen Kelzang

A Culture of Democracy

“Culture evolves over time and it may still be too early to start comparing old democracies with Bhutan. We are only four years into the new governance set-up. We are not simply talking about institutional set-ups when we talk of a culture of democracy. I believe we have done most of that already. State actors continue to perform their functions (although many maybe dissatisfied). Media and Press continue to bring out important issues in public. We have CSOs mostly in the social support category at the moment, nevertheless doing their bit. Most of us still believe that what we receive is a favour rather than a right for which we elect leaders and have state actors to dispense service to the citizenry. This shift is critical and fundamental to a flourishing healthy democracy.”



Sangay Khandu

Read about Bhutan



Copies are available for sale at the local bookstores.

BCMD produces books on Democracy for children, students and all age groups. Check out our new children’s book, “Who’s Responsible?” Learn how you and your kids can be active citizens and contribute to the community in your own little ways. Yuden and her friends learn all about it at school and home. Read to find out how.

It’s been 5 years since Bhutan transitioned from a Monarchy to a Constitutional Democracy. “Institutions of Democracy” is an introduction to the different structures of the new constitutional democracy in Bhutan. If you are keen to learn more about these institutions, this book is a perfect read.

“Reflecting Change in Modern Bhutan” is a collection of non-fiction stories on marriage, ritual, conflict resolution to B-pop to memories of family picnics to ancient monasteries. Stories were written by Bhutanese writers/ bloggers during a Creative Non-fiction Writing Workshop held in 2012.

BCMD Events Calendar: Upcoming Activities

Event: Media Nomads VII

Tentative Dates: June/July, 2013

Focus: The programme is designed to strengthen youth's abilities to think for themselves, and to communicate effectively, using media, and to raise powerful voices to contribute to the quality of life in their families, their communities. Will also focus on building the foundations for media literacy, enabling the youth to more critically evaluate the media they consume on a daily basis.

For whom: Youth

Event: Media Sensitisation Workshop for Gewog Administrative Officers III

Tentative Dates: July/August, 2013

Focus: To enhance the capacity of GAOs to be more effective in sharing public information for good democratic governance. To sensitise them about the important and strengthened role of media in a democracy, and how to work with media organisations in public information sharing.

For whom: Gewog Administrative Officers

Event: Bhutan Media Dialogue III

Tentative Dates: August, 2013

Focus: To bring the media and a cross-section of society together for discourse and exchange of ideas, to develop the media in Bhutan. To discuss and explore the role of media, its identity and responsibilities.

For whom: Reporters, editors, representatives of civil society, government, constitutional agencies and anyone who is interested in understanding and exploring the role of media to make democracy more meaningful.

Creation of a Media Lab for Youth

■ Tshering Eudon/ BCMD

There is now a new Media Lab to give young Bhutanese access to the technology and the training they need to harness their creative energy to become effective social actors, where they can share their views and stories through the media, rather than becoming just passive media consumers.

This has been set up by BCMD, in partnership with the Youth Development Fund (YDF), and is located at the old YDF squash court at Nazhoen Pelri, Thimphu. It will be officially launched in March, 2013.

It was set up after a needs assessment study, in which BCMD found that the majority of youth in Thimphu lacks access to basic technology, mainly still cameras, video cameras, computers (with relevant software) and printers.

Those who seek membership to the Media lab must be above the age of 12; younger members must be accompanied by a parent at all times. Members must also have attended an orientation course (offered every Saturday), where they will be taught how to use, create and think about media in socially responsible ways. A token fee for membership is yet to be decided.

The lab will be opened from 4pm to 9pm on weekdays, and from 2pm to 9pm on weekends. A custodian will manage the lab

and oversee the administration of all digital media technology. A fully trained staff will assist users for all equipment and software, with help guides and tutorials also available for reference.

We aim to give members access to the necessary media technology to hone their digital skills in expressing themselves. The Lab will provide a collaborative learning environment where youth can develop their media production skills and artistic leadership skills in support of community change. BCMD will also teach them how to document and portray issues that impact their lives, through documentary filmmaking, citizen journalism, digital photography, graphic design and podcast production, which can then be

used to advocate positive solutions to societal problems.



What does it mean to be a citizen?



"As a citizen, I will learn taekwondo to protect myself and to teach others when I grow up as a coach."

Reshes Rai, 11, Student, Sarpang



"There are so many responsibilities in one's life. This is why I have decided to contribute a lot of work and dedication to my family, King and the nation as a whole."

Tandin Wangmo, 15, Student, Haa



"The thing here is, we are in a unique situation. We have a unique culture, a unique spectrum of life, a small community and the pristine environment. In my own small ways, as a citizen I am responsible to preserve and promote it."

Karma Gelay, 47, Freelance Consultant, Thimphu



"I am 80 years old now and I see a lot of changes. Sometimes it is distressing to see that what used to be easy at my time is at scarce now. I spent my time chanting mantras and prayers to sustain my imagination and thoughts about this changing place. My responsibility as a citizen is getting over now, so it is the younger generations duty to listen to and preserve what has been there from ages."

Tshering Zangmo, 80, House wife, Mongar



"It is all about working hard and contributing to nation building. This is what being a citizen means to me."

Jamtsho, 26, Taxi driver, Mongar.



"The first and the foremost thing that is vital is that one should be true to oneself. Only then can we contribute to nation building combined with dedication, compassion, enthusiasm and integrity."

Pema Chokey, 24, Thimphu

The 7 Fundamental Principles of Parliament- Article 10

1. There shall be a parliament for Bhutan in which all legislative powers under this constitution are vested and which shall consist of the Druk Gyalpo, the National Council and the National Assembly.
2. Parliament shall ensure that the government safeguards the interests of the nation and fulfils the aspirations of the people through public review of policies and issues, bills and other legislations, and scrutiny of state functions.
3. The election of the members of parliament shall be in accordance with the provisions of the electoral laws of the kingdom.
4. A person shall not be a member of the national council as well as the national assembly or local governance at the same time.
5. The Druk Gyalpo shall summon the first sitting of parliament after each general election.
6. At the commencement of each session of parliament, the Druk Gyalpo shall be received in a joint sitting of parliament with Chibdrel Ceremony. Each session shall be opened with a Zhungdrel- Phunsum Tshog- Pai Ten-Drel and each session shall conclude with the Tashi- mon- lam.
7. The Druk Gyalpo may address or sit in the proceedings of either house or a joint sitting of parliament as and when deemed expedient.