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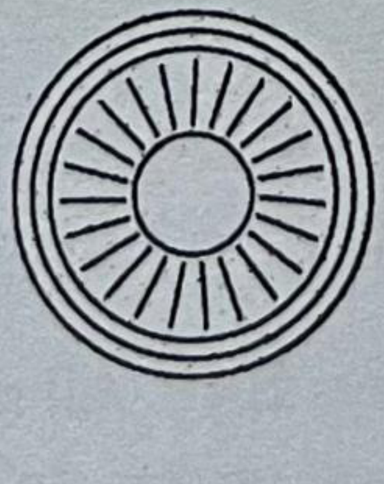

Centre for Bhutan & GNH Studies

Buddhist Contributions to Human Development[+]

Tshering Tobgay[*]

Introduction

The birth, enlightenment and passing of the Buddha all happened in the second month of the Buddhist calendar, which is known in Sanskrit as Vaisakha. The Vesak Day has been known by different names in different countries and it has been celebrated for the last two thousand years by all Buddhists around the world to remind them of these three most sacred events in Buddha's life. Vesak Day is a great occasion for an international gathering to meet, celebrate, remember and learn from the life of Buddha.

Several global issues were discussed in the previous Vesak Day celebrations. In particular, the past Vesak celebrations have brought out certain future directions for all Buddhist communities. This year's Vesak celebrations will be similarly fruitful and stimulating, with its theme on Buddhist contributions to human development.

[+] This paper is a keynote address delivered by Tshering Tobgay at the 15th Vesak Day in Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Conference Hall, Ayutthaya, Bangkok, Thailand, abridged and edited for this journal.

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Bhutan's Spiritual Background and its Significance for Human Development

Bhutan is the last Vajrayana Buddhist Kingdom. Bhutan has been Buddhist continuously since the 8th century. In that long period, Buddhism has shaped its governance, culture, and lifestyle. The three highest teachers who left deepest spiritual imprints on Bhutan are the Buddha, Guru Rinpoche, and Zhabdrung Rinpoche. Guru Rinpoche is the considered as the second Buddha because he brought Buddhism to Bhutan and the Himalayas from India in the 8th century. Zhabdrung Rinpoche, a monk, founded Bhutan as a nation in 1626, with the intention to make its citizens benefit from Buddha's teachings and to influence governance of the country by Buddha's teachings.

What is the state of Bhutan as a Vajrayana Buddhist Kingdom? Both private and state Buddhist institutions are still vibrant and influential. The support of lay people and the state is very strong for monks and priests. Society in Bhutan is still steeped in the tenets of Vajrayana Buddhism and the citizens of Bhutan are spiritual. About 80 percent of the Bhutanese are Buddhists; the rest are largely Hindus. Monasteries and hermitages are very active. Buddhism is taught also in schools. People spend substantial time every day on spiritual activity. According to a national survey on time use in 2015, people spent 36 minutes on average every day mantra, prayers and meditation and this daily average increased to two hours 25 minutes per day for those over 60 years of age (Centre for Bhutan & GNH Studies, 2015). People spend more time on spiritual activities such as mantra and prayers as they grow older.

Leadership

How has Vajrayana Buddhism influenced human development in Bhutan? What are Buddhist contributions to human development in general? As a Vajrayana Buddhist state, the main influences on human development in Bhutan has come from two sources: governance and leaders. Buddhism have influenced critically both the governance and its leadership in the country, and through these two institutions affected human development.

Let us take a look at leadership in Vajrayana Buddhist Bhutan. The Buddhist model of leadership has deeply influenced its leaders and our monarchs (Karma Ura, 2010). Historically, everywhere in Asia, all Buddhist monarchs have aspired to live by the ideals of Buddhist monarch. The exemplar of a Buddhist monarch is the chakravartin, the universal wheel-turning king. This concept of Buddhist ruler has been an inspiration also among Bhutanese monarchs. They have tried to live and rule from an enlightened attitude, as if following the original 'Ten Duties of the King' found in the Buddha's teachings: Ten Duties of the King that are applicable to any leader are charity, moral character, sacrifice for people's welfare, integrity, kindness, austerity, freedom from ill will, non-violence, patience, non-opposition to the will of people (Rahula, 1959/2001, pp. 84-85). Further, they have been inspired by the six far-reaching qualities advocated in the prajna paramitas consisting of generosity, discipline, patience, diligence, meditative concentration and wisdom. A chakravartin or a model Buddhist ruler is an agent of Avalokitesharva, the deity of compassion, with his thousand-arms and thousand-eyes. Avalokitesharva shines the rays of his compassion on beings sunk in sufferings and he creates the conditions of happiness and enlightenment for all sentient beings (Walter, 2009). This

is the vision of Avalokitesharva that leaders and government influenced by such a concept were expected to fulfil.

In Vajrayana Buddhism, at the least, a leader was expected to possess three qualities, namely compassion, strength, and knowledge. Knowledge here is more specific. A leader, a king or ruler must have knowledge of various kinds of suffering and how to bring its end. Other kinds of knowledges and strengths are by themselves not so beneficial, if not tempered by compassion and wisdom about suffering. Only compassion guides leaders towards benefiting all others beings consisting of both human beings and animals. In a world of increasing professional and intellectual diversification, a leader cannot be an expert in many fields. Regardless of a range of other expertise a leader might possess, the most central requirement for every leader is compassion. Practice of leadership driven by compassion towards both kinds of sentient beings is the essence of Buddhist leadership. Such leadership qualities found in our monarchs contributed to an enlightened governance in Bhutan.

Governance

But any leadership including Buddhist, however enlightened, cannot create lasting impacts unless the vision of a leader is institutionalized at the level of governance. In leading a society, all desired values need to be enshrined in frameworks of development and governance, with clear policies and goals along with a clear system of measurement of those goals and policies. And in a Buddhist state, the values that underlie its frameworks of development and associated policies should be broadly in keeping with economic, social, cultural and spiritual values of Buddhism. In keeping with the primary Buddhist understanding that all beings aspire for happiness and

wellbeing, Bhutan's ultimate value is happiness, not material goal such as GDP. In Buddhist perspective, happiness should be built based only on wholesome mindful life, towards all sentient beings.

The ideals of governance that drew on both science and Buddhism for Bhutan was formulated by the Fourth Kin (reign 1972-2006) as GNH (Karma Ura, 2017). GNH is a development framework applies to official plans and programs. GNH is multi-dimensional so as to take account of the multidimensional inner and outer needs of human beings. GNH index, and the policies and programs that advance it, is based on the nine domains of GNH. The nine domains are (1) psychological wellbeing, (2) balanced time use, (3) community vitality, (4) cultural diversity and resilience, (5) ecological diversity and resilience (6) health, (7) education, (8) good governance, and lastly (9) living standards or material conditions. There is a profound interdependency between various domains of our life – and our life with the lives of others, including other sentient beings. Giving importance to health, education, good governance and living standards are prevalent in most development strategies. However, attaching equal importance to psychological wellbeing, balanced time use, community vitality, cultural resilience, and ecology are consistent with emphasis found in Buddhism for these domains, for wholesome human life. His Majesty the King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck has said that GNH is "development with values." (His Majesty King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, 2008). Most of the values underlying GNH are aligned broadly with Buddhism. As an example, GNH measurement includes qualitative measurement of emotions such as compassion, contentment and calmness. It also includes measurement of mental stress and mental health. GNH indicators includes, as part of quantitative times use

measurement, duration spend every day on meditation and meditative prayers.

Happiness arises not only from material living conditions, but it arises interdependently from many other aspects of life. As all things arise interdependently, the cause of happiness should not be reduced to a few things. Human needs are diverse. They need a range of social, psychological, economic and cultural factors and these factors cannot be traded off with income alone. When a range of these needs are met, happiness arises interdependently.

GNH as a development framework is complemented by a GNH composite index and various indicators to track the impact of policies and programs. So, the implementation of the framework is to a large extent subjected to measurement and feedback from systematic surveys that are used for policy purposes.

GNH as a framework for development is currently applied mostly for assessing and directing official plans and programmes (Centre for Bhutan & GNH Studies, 2016). It leaves out the private sector. GNH cannot be effective if the private sector businesses and corporations that drive the economy do not reflect it. Globally, big companies generate greater part of GDP than national governments. Big businesses are often more powerful than national governments. Corporate giants effect the environment, communities, cultures and climate more than consumers.

In view of this, Bhutan is launching GNH business certification to be applied to businesses and corporations in Bhutan (Tshoki Zangmo et al., 2018). This initiative on GNH certification we have started welcomes any corporations abroad to join the

movement. Normal businesses may stress profits, turnover and growth to the exclusion of other important concerns. But a business with a GNH perspective should minimize suffering and promote happiness of workers, and people in general. And it must neither destroy the planet nor sell cravings to the people.

Buddhist values towards environment and sentient beings have shaped GNH's high emphasis on ecological integrity in Bhutan. In Buddhist vision, not only human beings but all sentient beings intrinsically aspire to happiness and therefore merit contentment, security and peace. Human beings have a responsibility to preserve environment, for their own happiness and for the sustained welfare of other sentient beings.

When we look back at the accelerating global history of progresses made in human rights and freedoms, there has been greater and greater protection of human rights. Consequently, lives lost to wars, murders, and terrorism have fortunately decreased. But this is not the same picture we get when we take a look at the lives of other animals, both wild and domestic (Karma Ura, 2017). The number of lives of animals taken, often violently, around the world has increased on an immeasurable scale in recent history. Statistics of slaughter of livestock show that 66 billion farm animals and 84 billion other animals are killed every year (Occupy for Animals, 2017). Animals have the same capacity to suffer as human beings. They have psychological, behavioural, and evolutionary similarities with us (Singer, 2013). The welfare of an unimaginable number of livestock and wildlife also deserve attention of human beings.

Buddhism has moulded Bhutanese attitude to the environment and animals. Bhutan is one of the world's

smallest countries, but it has undertaken one of the world's heaviest commitments to conservation. Bhutan is a biological hotspot. About 5,000 plant species, 200 mammalian species and 700 bird species are found in a small country with its tremendous microclimatic ecology. The country has devoted 51 percent of its surface area to nature and wildlife reserves (Department of Forests & Park Services, n.d.). It has written into its constitution that it will maintain a minimum of 60 percent of its area as forest. Already, we have 72 percent forest coverage. Bhutan is the first country to declare its aim to remain carbon neutral. Bhutan's entire country generates only 2.2 million tons of carbon dioxide each year, but its forests sequester three times that amount. So, Bhutan is a net carbon sink, sequestering 4 million tons every year. Such conservation effort would not have been possible in Bhutan without a national consensus based on Buddhist values.

Buddhism and Human Development

What is Buddhist contribution to human development in general? Lord Buddha's dharma was ultimately about how human beings ought to live. His ethics of living took account of human existence that is riddled by impermanence, un-satisfactoriness and non-self. Among Lord Buddha's countless teachings, the teachings on ethics has been of direct relevance to human development. He or she develops when the way towards the cessation of suffering is found. As Lord Buddha has taught, this ability to bring about cessation of suffering depends on insight and analytic understanding about how human psychology works. The inability to see reality as it is, because of *avijja* or existential ignorance, can be a main form of blindness. Indeed, avijja means 'not seeing' or failing to be aware of the deep interdependence among all (Herschock, 2006, pp. 44-45).

According to Vajrayana Buddhism followed in Bhutan, human beings' experiences of themselves occur through three gateways of experiences: through their body, mind and speech. Lord Buddha's teachings about behavioural, verbal and mental actions that would lead to happiness and wellbeing is the main basis of human development in Vajrayana Buddhism. Human development depends on advancement in these three dimensions of experiences.

As regards the body, human body is the foundation and context of any experience. A body's realization of its subtle energies and powers, and transformation depends on mind-body practices, from breathing, yoga to meditation.

Speech or sound is another door of experience. Sound of music, chants and mantras and sound of nature have tremendous bearing on perception and human wellbeing. Exploration of speech and sound that is healing and transformative is also a main door of human experience and path to human development. Above all, in modern society with increasingly powerful media, right or ethical communication has become extremely important.

In terms of mind as the third gateway of experience, in all schools of Buddhism, the first step is to experience tranquil awareness, aimed at clarity and mindfulness. The mind should be free from being captured by impressions or thoughts. The final vision, in Vajrayana Buddhism, is to experience a state of non-dual mindfulness, by practicing generation and completion stages. This stage requires tremendous ability of visualization.

Advanced practitioners and human beings are thus developed by a variety of practices that bring body, speech and mind to

its fullest potential. But for the ordinary lay people, Vajrayana Buddhism recommended ten virtuous to be followed and ten non-virtuous to be given up with respect to their behavioural, verbal and mental actions. These prescriptions were historically the main yardsticks for the development of human beings as well as societies in the Himalayas.

In Buddhism, development is ultimately interpreted as the development of the person in terms of spiritual and psychological aspects, once a decent livelihood is secured. Decent fulfilment of needs or livelihood can be defined objectively according to functioning. Needs are not relative. The causes of under-development and associated suffering lies largely in the under developed human spirit (Aris,1990).

Buddhist education and development are intended to enable people to have *vijja* or true knowledge through ability to see reality correctly (Smith & Whitaker, 2016, p. 529). In this respect, the Buddhist education is a process of overcoming the three poisons represented graphically by a black pig, a green snake, and a red cockerel. But dealing with three poisons is no longer an individual issue. Buddhist social critics have pointed out that we have reached a stage of institutionalizing greed, aggression and delusion (Loy, 2008), through business corporations, weapon production system, and misleading media and advertising.

Human Development Index

It is perhaps appropriate also to compliment and refer to Human Development promoted by the UN for the focus it has brought since the 1990s. In Human Development Index that is used to rank nations by the UNDP, the key components are income, longevity and literacy levels among the populations of

member countries. These three constituent elements, including material progress represented by income, as important for human welfare, are consistent with Buddhism. But we should remind ourselves that Buddhism stresses that material progress should be accompanied by spiritual and ethical progress. The Human Development Report released in 1993 underlined the important caution that "there is no automatic link between income and human development. (United Nations Development Programme, 1993, p. 10). It is not possible to make a logical transition from high income level to high standard of living, and further to high level of happiness (Karma Ura, 993). This is also the contention of GNH.

The Sufficiency Economy of Thailand

The Sufficiency Economy Philosophy conceptualized and promoted by the late revered King of Thailand is another example of human development approach that has elements drawn from Buddhism. Its three components consisting of moderation, reasonableness and self-immunity and resilience, which further depends on wisdom and integrity, are a prescription for people to live holistically. His late Majesty the King of Thailand has said, “Sufficiency is moderation. If one is moderate in one’s desires, one will have less craving and one will take less advantage of others.” (Broderick, (2013). The Sufficiency Economy’s objective is to foster harmony and wellbeing for everyone in the society.

The example of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy in Thailand, in addition to GNH in Bhutan, points out how different nations are tapping into Buddhism in the contemporary world at the national level. And, many other nations have been doing similar things in their own contexts. Buddhism’s popularity has grown over the past half century along with interest in

adapting it for applications in many spheres of human development. It is also most encouraging to note that applications of Buddhism for human development is taking place most notably at the non-governmental levels, among NGOs, civil society organizations, community organizations, religious bodies, non-profits organizations, universities, schools, cooperatives, businesses, forums, platforms, and many other forms of organizations. Buddhism is becoming once again socially engaged and focused on the creation of the public good as it has always been. It is already making major contributions in the fields of holistic health, environmental preservation, governance improvements, conflict resolutions, media reforms, consumer awareness, and so forth.

We face a challenging and troubling future with arms race, ecological collapse, climate change, addictions, inequality, unfairness, conflicts, and technological and institutional domination of human beings. Yet as Buddhist we remind ourselves that no situation is ever fixed, and it can be turned around. All future situations are also merely possibilities that changes with positive values and intentions. Buddhism has ever more to contribute to holistic development for all and all for holistic development. We are all in a flux of a direction, and the direction can be maintained by the three-fold qualities of prajna (wisdom), samadhi (concentration), and sila (moral clarity) in each of us.

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Spirituality in Management Education*

Karma Ura+

This paper is about the global challenges on the one hand and values on the other. Being from a Buddhist country such values may take a Buddhist tinge. The scale of interdependence between people of different countries and global challenges suggest that our values and behaviour should be aligned.

Most nations and peoples are motivated by the twin goals of peace and prosperity. Global peace has improved on a short-term retrospective, according to Global Peace Index (Institute of Economics and Peace, 2017). Global Peace Index is a composite index calculated by aggregating six measures of conflicts, 10 measures of social safety and security, and seven measures of militarization. Looking to the near future, the conditions of peace are expected to increase.

Prosperity has gone up as indicated by the fall in poverty and by the rise in global per capita income. The global income rose 22 times since 1960 in a matter of 57 years. Per capita income increased 57 times in the same period. Poverty is based on $1.90 poverty line at 2011 purchasing power parity (PPP). In the last 25 years, the number of the poor fell from 1950 million

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in 1990 to 702 million in 2015 (Kuhlman, 2015). Not only poverty fell, the world is set to become richer.

Both the measures of peace and prosperity, however, reflect external conditions. These measures do not adequately tell us how human beings experience their lives within and through their thoughts and behaviours. They do not convey any deeper trends of deep human happiness or unhappiness. In fact, if we go by subjective wellbeing, which is perhaps too simple as well as not an encompassing measure to capture happiness, it is moving up very slowly. According to Jeffrey Sachs it has been falling since 2013 in countries like the USA because of social rather than economic crises (in Helliwell et al., 2017).

Increasing number of babies are born every second. Global population has reached 7.5 billion in 2017 (Worldometers, 2017). Global population growth rate peaked at about two percent a decade ago (Piketty, 2014), but it is still positive at little higher than one percent in 2017. Global population growth may become negative only by 2100. With every human being born, more ecological weight or footprints are exerted every second. Not only more people are born every year, they live longer. Technology and social progress have made them live longer, especially in the northern hemisphere.

One result of the growth of economy based mainly on non-agricultural sectors and a spectacular rise of global population has been urbanization of the population on a gigantic scale. Harvey (1982, 2000) has noted that credit expansion, as a vent for channelling surplus capital, is deeply connected to process of urbanization and property markets. Global urbanization sustains credit expansion. With an extraordinary level of concentration of human population in mega cities, we are closer to each other more than ever, but also far off from earth,

nature, solitude and silence. Time is becoming scarce, perhaps more than money in most people's lives. People live faster with more and more things to do within a given period of time in cities (Levine, 2003a; Levine, 2003b).

Justin Whitaker (2010) has compared our contemporary context to the Age of Wanderers (Shramanas) in India that lasted from fourth to sixth centuries AD. Out of the Age of Shramanas emerged many Indian spiritual traditions. They shared many common features. During that period of Wanderers or Shramanas, for some 300 years, the impact of Iron Age made the settled life possible. The production of farm surplus made dense settlements in towns and cities possible. It was a period of social transformation paralleling urbanization, dislocation and disruption. New social and economic forms produced a new sense of anxiety that the new philosophies or spiritual explorations attempted to address. We live in a similar environment of Information Age, and increasing urbanization, dislocation and disruption.

The Buddhist response to the crisis of the Age of Wanderers was to introduce four noble truths and other values guiding life. Its analysis led to a path of resolving dukkha. According to David Loy (2008) recognition of dukkha is not distinctive about Buddhism. Many Indian traditions speak of Samsara. The most distinctive understanding of Buddhism is that "intrinsic connection between dukkha and one's delusive sense of self is the most difficult dukkha to understand in the constructedness of the self (anatta)". Our sense of self is a result of psychological, social, and linguistic constructs. According to Loy, a sense of self arises from three factors: (1) psychologically constructed self; (2) socially constructed self in relation with other constructed selves; and (3) linguistically constructed self such as I, me, mine, myself creating illusion that there must be me.

Buddhism offered a radical view that "awakening to our constructedness is the only real solution to one's most fundamental anxiety" (Loy, 2008, p. 17). Profound mental technique like non-dual mindfulness leads to a realization that "a constructed sense of self is not the real self." Buddhism challenges us with the proposition that the fundamental constructed self we feel is a mask to hide what is not there and that "lack of self and the nothing at its core" is repressed in our everyday life.

Out of our immense effort to repress this "nothing at its core" (Loy, 2008), we try to become more real through wealth, fame and relative success, and other pursuits. We should add that digital advancement has enabled us to see and be seen in far greater numbers, making us feel supposedly more real than ever. All of us may not be able to take the spiritual path, devoting long years to yoga and meditation aimed at achieving non-dual mindfulness. At an easier level, Buddhism prescribed ethics of speech, action and livelihood, which were for lay people, appealingly put as five precepts of living. Certain global trends are viewed from the perspective the five lay precepts.

Consider taking life of sentient beings. With laws protecting life and liberty, progress in moral consciousness has decreased the number of people's lives from being taken. In recent history, taking of lives of human beings has decreased. On the contrary, taking the lives of animals has worsened on an immeasurable scale over time. Statistics of slaughter of cows, chickens, pigs, and sheep show that 150 billion are killed by the meat, dairy, egg and fish industries every year. 56 billion of these 150 billion are farm animals (Occupy for Animals, 2017). 3000 animals are shot, hung, gassed, electrocuted or shredded every second in tormenting manner we cannot even begin to imagine. Each of us is estimated to eat about 20 animals every year on average including fishes. If that is the

annual rate of eating slaughtered animals, each of us chomp down 1400 animals over our lifetime of 70 years. We feed, they die. If a person is an intense meat eater as he or she is in the USA, lifetime animal eaten is estimated to be 7000 animals (Humane Society of the United States, 2017).

The evolution of human beings as meat eaters is built metaphorically on mountains of animal flesh (sha khon) who died as our food, as one Buddhist yogi Lhatsun Namkha Jigme (nd) wrote.* Yet we can live in vegan, organic and environmental way for some part of our time, even if not always. Animals have the same capacity to suffer as human beings. They have psychological, behavioural, and evolutionary similarities with us, according to Peter Singer (2015). Mammals, birds, vertebrates, and some invertebrates and human beings are similar in these aspects. If so, they deserve better treatment during their lives, with less pain or suffering.

Mahayana Buddhism has a deontogical view with regard to not taking what is not freely given. The criterion is not determined by the degree of good or bad outcome. It is wrong irrespective of the degree of consequence. Taking what is not given is equivalent to lack of consent. In a contemporary context, we have to ask to whom something belongs? Who owns it? Could we interpret this to include exploitation of any kind, including by corporations, who exploit to make profit. One consequence of exploitation is inequality. No exploited worker freely gives

* He lists three karmic debt (lan chags) owed to various creditors: they are the debt of food (zas), the debt of land (gnas), and the debt of wealth (capital, nor) which are owed by the present generations.

away all of his or her fruits of labour. No customer gives away all the unjust prices freely, if he or she could oppose.

The precept of false speech could be extended to any form of disinformation and misinformation including untrue labelling and marketing.

The precept of avoiding sensual misconduct could cover any indulgence, including addiction, craving, and dependence that causes harm to users as well as others. About 246 million people were reported to be using illicit drug in 2013 (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2013). This is one in every 20 adults between 15-65 years of age. The number of addicts is expected to rise rapidly among the urban populations in the developing countries.

It is important to distinguish between personal values and institutional or systemic values. Institutions and corporations operate at a collective level, at an impersonal level, where profit and growth take a life of their own. There is no personal moral responsibility applied to institutions and corporations. Institutions are made into legal person, but they have no moral personhood. Yet, the world is directed and shaped largely by corporations and institutions. World is owned by corporations, which are further controlled by significant minority of the global population. They play us all along the narratives they want us to play (Hershock, 1999). Guiding indicators of most corporations consist of financial and market performance indicators but very little of spiritual and moral concerns. Moral concerns are relegated to individual and households. But the individuals may be complicit or forced to play along with organizations.

Mathew Kapstein (2000) noted perceptively that Buddhism was once the most dominant cultural system in the world. Mahayana Buddhism spread north becoming the most influential cultural export from ancient Indian civilization. Key methods of Mahayana included not only the threefold system of ethics, meditation and wisdom, but included additional virtues such as generosity, energy, persistence and patience while practicing the Bodhisattva path. In a Bodhisattva path, which is the path of collective action towards enlightenment, concentration, patience, endeavour and long-term commitment are needed. None are possible without focus, and that is not possible without concentration.

The economies and societies are being increasingly redefined by capitalism or corporate power, urban metropolis, cultural imperialism, neo-liberalism and digitalism, leaving very little space even to be 'street Bodhisattva'.

How can we rebuild our values in the contemporary world? While we may share anxieties that arises from social transformation, dislocation and community disintegration similar to what took place during the Age of Wanderers from the fourth to sixth century India, our world is on a dangerous edge unlike ever before in the known and unknown history of the planet.

First of the two inconceivable threats is climate change. Climate scientists and Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have forecasted that in spite of "current commitments from the world's nations, we will overshoot the 2°C target" because we are still emitting 42 giga tonnes of CO^2 each year. Change is not yet happening fast enough (Heffeinan, 2014). Arctic as we know is almost gone and sea level are bound to rise. The Himalayas as we have seen in our childhood

will not exist for long. A hotter world will not only drown assets and land, but make the global farm output fall heavily.

The negative impact of climate change will fall heavily on those nations and places, which had used the fossil fuels relatively less and have played less role in causing climate change. Thus, the ecological creditors are the ones who could be devastated more than the ecological debtors.

Annual GDP is lower than their debt stock in many countries. It exceeds their annual income in some countries. It means that future generations have to pay the debt out of their income. The US is the main debtor to the world, borrowing US $ 2 billion a day (Harvey, 2007) mainly from China, Japan and the Arab countries (Harvey, 2007, pp. 193-198). Such mismatch between debt and income are not only adverse. Future generations are the ones who will pay greater price than the present generation.

Ecological and financial debts are owed by the present generation to the future generations for imposing arbitrary burdens on them. We owe not only gratitude to the past but to the future generations. The awareness of living beyond means in moral and material senses found in these two debts should reorient our consciousness.

There is both a moral dimension to climate change between present and future generation and between intense fossil fuel users and the rests, including other sentient beings who did not at all contribute to the escalation of desire for fossil fuel driven technology and fossil fuel-based energy.

The second inconceivable threat to human existence that did not exist till 1943 is the presence of more than 15,000 nuclear

weapons (Tian et al., 2016). And as if these are not enough there are more nations who want to be nuclear-armed. In fact, such industrial scale production of instruments of destruction and murder began in the age of empire building. The 19th century (1800) saw the development of rifles like Enfield rifle in 1853, which was used throughout the British Empire to suppress colonies with minimum manpower and maximum lethal force.

Each time a weapon was invented, it was hoped that it would be the weapon that would end all wars. The Maxim gun could fire 600 rounds a minute invented in 1866 was then considered the weapon that would end all wars. But these dark and terrible sides of innovation only led to more sinister technologies. Killing machines with greater precisions and force are being invented. Military spending dwarfs spending on climate change. Battle deaths underestimate the ripple effects of conflicts. In some countries, arm exports fuel the economy. They are the merchants of death, in a sense. Cessation of conflicts would harm their exports and their economies. As Loy (2008) commented, the theory of preventive wars and just wars "every war becomes marketed as a Just War."

I began this paper with reference to the twin goal of prosperity and peace. We do not know how much prosperity will be enough, if ever. We do not know how much nuclear weapons would be ironically enough for peace.

Though the measure may be crude, inequality measure shows a stark distribution. Oxfam report shows that 62 richest people in the world own 50 percent of the wealth in 2015 (Oxfarm, 2016). In the USA, which is the wealthiest nation on earth, top 1% of the population owned 20 percent of the income in 2010 (UNESCO, 2016). So, the world we live in is highly unequal in

economic term. Oxfam study showed that one percent owned 58 percent of total wealth in India. That is "57 billionaires in India now have the same wealth ($216 billion) as that of the bottom 70 percent population of the country," although such measures may be taken as indicative rather than definitive.

While infectious diseases are controlled, the major disease burdens are non-infectious and life style related disease. Ischemic heart diseases, depression and mental disorders are major sources of ill health. As Michael Marmot (2006) noted, "the key to understanding and improving health is in the mind."

The need to shift to better values is obvious in the light of these complexities. Values and policies should be linked. Examples of clear set of values that are linked to policies is Gross National Happiness in Bhutan. Gross National Happiness takes both subjective and objective conditions of living into account in major development programs. It is part of value education in schools (Karma Ura, 2016) with the hope that more aspects of moral personhood are built during the most formative period of life.

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Wikipedia as a Tool for GNH

Bunty Avieson[*]

Introduction

Wikipedia is a free platform for sharing knowledge that fits comfortably within Bhutan's development framework of Gross National Happiness. The online encyclopaedia is a global project run by volunteers that aims to provide *all* the world's knowledge, free to everyone. Its grand vision is to dissolve knowledge hierarchies previously determined by education, economics, culture and geography. While Bhutanese citizens are among the millions worldwide who use English Wikipedia every day as a general reference, Bhutanese attempts to publish about Bhutan have been less successful and pages about Bhutan are mostly written by foreigners. There is also a Dzongkha edition, which has limited pages that remain largely unvisited. The low level of contributions by Bhutanese is partly due to Wikipedia's publishing protocols, which are confusing and can require training, but also the editing culture of the site often is discouraging for newcomers. This paper aims to suggest how Bhutan could benefit from Wikipedia and equally, how Wikipedia could benefit from Bhutan. Wikipedia offers a range of opportunities for education, tourism, language and culture. At the same time, being a digitally-advanced, strongly oral culture, Bhutan could help Wikipedia realise its ambitious aims. First, its citizens would bring a broader perspective,

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grounded in the kingdom's unique worldview that is influenced by its orality, Mahayana Buddhism and Gross National Happiness. Second, both Wikipedia sites – English and Dzongkha - have audio capacities, which are underutilized. This is a wasted opportunity. The Bhutanese have well embraced modern digital technologies, such as WeChat and Facebook, adopting them for culturally specific purposes, and I propose that if key groups within the Bhutanese community were trained in the publishing protocols of Wikipedia, over time they would extend Wikipedia's use of the audio capabilities which would benefit the international community, as well as other oral cultures and differently abled peoples, including dyslexic and blind.

Background

Wikipedia launched in 2001 as an online platform seeking to amass all human knowledge in one place for public benefit. The intellectual wealth of the world was to be collated and freely shared. Using the Internet and new digital technologies for collaboration, Wikipedia was intended to bring a new era of global knowledge equity. In many significant ways it has been outstandingly successful, used by millions daily. It has developed into a site for robust knowledge construction and low-cost dissemination. English Wikipedia is the world's fifth most popular website and there are 301 different language Wikipedias, including Dzongkha (WM, a, nd). By September 2018, 5.7 million articles had been created on the English site by volunteers freely contributing their intellectual labour. Other Internet giants are further embedding Wikipedia as the world's most popular information source. Since 2012 Google have included Fact Boxes in their search results, populated from English Wikipedia pages; and in 2018 YouTube announced it would counter fake news videos with links to Wikipedia (Maher, 2018). This success brings with it power and

ethical responsibilities to ensure accuracy, and that existing global inequalities are not exacerbated or further entrenched on the site.

To this end, Wikipedia faces many challenges. While the site started as 'anyone can edit', the power structure that has evolved in Wikipedia reflects its origins in the US technology capital of Silicon Valley. Early contributors accrued administrative privileges and created editing protocols according to *their* needs. Two decades later Wikipedia's editing community has come to be dominated by white, western men in the Global North, who are likely to be technically skilled, white collar and Christian (Gallert & van der Velden, 2013). As the site operates according to consensus, this skews content towards their world view as well as to first-world topics. Less represented are women, minority groups and countries in the developing world (Ford et al., 2018). Two rules in particular disadvantage these groups - 'notability' and 'verifiability'.

Wikipedia's rule of 'notability' requires that the topic has received significant coverage in reliable sources that are independent of the subject. This policy was intended to avoid 'indiscriminate inclusion of topics' and ensure the site is not mis-used for marketing and promotion (W.P. a, nd). But in practice it has created barriers for articles that don't reflect the interests of the editors. Examples of this bias include the last descendant of the Indian Cherokee's Blue People Clan, Gi-Dee-Thlo-Ah-Ee, who was considered important enough by the Cherokee Nation that it published a book about her, but who was deemed to lack notability by US Wikipedians who deleted her page. In Kenya, Makmende is a cultural figure, similar to Ap Tsara the fictitious wise man who featured as a cartoon in weekly newspaper *Bhutan Observer.* Kenyans tried repeatedly to publish a page about Makmende but because people outside Kenya had not heard of him, an editing war erupted (Bidwell et

al., 2015, p. 125). Internet researcher Ethan Zuckerman identified this as a serious issue for Wikipedia in an article where he posed the question: 'What happens when we share a language but not a culture?' (2010)

This is similar to the Bhutanese experience where a few contributors identifying as Bhutanese have sought to publish on the site, but for various reasons, have stopped. The most controversial of these was a contributor who created an online identity as Thimphu electrician 'Kuchen Zimjah' in 2013 and uploaded audio of himself reading aloud the first page of the Bhutanese passport. In 2015 the page suddenly became popular and received more than 1.7 million hits in one week and triggered an editing war that spilled onto YouTube, where he was accused of being racist and a hoaxer. The episode has become legendary in the world of Wikipedia (DiPalma, 2015; Wens, 2015). Ultimately Zimjah's audio was removed and replaced by a man with a European accent reading aloud the words on the front page of the Bhutanese passport. Whether 'Zimjah' was actually a Bhutanese citizen and whatever his personal motivation for creating the page, the episode is emblematic of both Bhutan's difficulties trying to publish on the site, as well as Wikipedia's unrealized audio potential. As 'Zimjah' demonstrated, the site has the capacity to include audio on each page, even though it is not a common practice.

Wikipedia's rule of 'verifiability' is equally problematic, requiring that no original material can be included. All the information must first have been published elsewhere. But not all human knowledge has been published or written down in any form. Human knowledge is greater than just printed knowledge and to recognise only what has been printed is to exclude entire cultures, those millions of people for whom knowledge is a living, oral tradition. Oral cultures continue to

thrive using their traditional oral practices in places such as Australia, Africa, India and, of course, Bhutan.

These protocols of notability and verifiability create hurdles for the large percentage of the world who aren't male, white, Christian and born into the print culture of the Global North, and the combative editing culture has created problems with editor renewal and retention (Gallus, 2016). However, these problems are well recognised by the Wikimedia Foundation.

The Wikimedia Foundation

Wikipedia's development is governed by the well-resourced Wikimedia Foundation, which funds the costs of hosting the site online and tries to steer it towards the founders' original noble vision of equality and inclusion. It works in a number of ways to counter the biases of the editing community and address the lack of diversity. The foundation cannot interfere directly with editing decisions on the site, but it wields its influence in other ways. In 2010, the foundation funded a range of projects to improve diversity of gender, ethnicity and geography. (Out of this emerged WikiProject Bhutan which attracted about a dozen, mostly non-Bhutanese contributors, but none appear to be active in 2018 (W.P., c, nd).

In July 2018, for the first time the Wikimedia Foundation held its annual conference on the continent of Africa, as part of its vision for diversity and global inclusion and to push back against the mono-culture of English Wikipedia. There was much discussion around how to include different knowledge systems, how to reduce existing biases and how to design new methods that recognize oral sources. Indian engineer, Siddarth Tripath, is working on a project with illiterate rural communities, recording their elders as oral citations (W.M. b),

nd). In rural Namibia, researchers worked with the indigenous OvaHerero community of 250,000 people in an experiment to convert local knowledge that had never been written down into oral citations (Gallert et al., 2016). Researchers from the University of Leeds in the UK undertook a project with primary schools in South Africa to bring the knowledge held by local elders onto Wikipedia. Under the oversight of a scientific review committee of South African scholars, the research team interviewed respected elders and published Wikipedia pages about the community that were relevant to the primary school syllabus (Ford et al., 2018). These projects offer models for Bhutan, where local knowledge is extensive, but may not have been written down. A committee of Bhutanese scholars, historians and teachers could be established to confirm locally held knowledge and thereby meet Wikipedia's protocols of verifiability.

The foundation also provides training support and experienced editors to work with cultural institutions. The Wikipedian-in-residence project places editors in museums, galleries and libraries to digitize collections and upload them to the site. Bhutan's museums contain a wealth of historical artefacts that could be photographed and uploaded to the site, accessible to schools wherever there is Internet.

Wikipedia and GNH

GNH provides an ethical framework to consider the benefits of Wikipedia to the community. It comprises of nine domains and are measured according based on these nine domains:

- psychological wellbeing
- health
- education

- time use
- cultural diversity and resilience
- good governance
- community vitality
- ecological diversity and resilience
- living standards

Bhutan could use Wikipedia as a cultural repository and tool for education, as well as a site for community building. This fits well with the two pillars of sustainable socio-economic development and preservation and promotion of culture.

Former Education Minister Thakur S. Powdyel defined culture as: '… the way we proclaim our identity and our being - individual, social, national. We express it in the way we are, in our thoughts, in our actions, beliefs and superstitions, songs and dances, sports and games, weights, measures and units, art and architecture, faith and worship, rites and rituals, ceremonies and celebrations, language and customs, food and drinks, name and nomenclature, signs and symbols, dream and world-view' (2007, p. 51).

Most of the articles about Bhutanese culture have been written by people from Russia, Nepal, India and America. Further, many pages about Bhutan exist on non-English editions of Wikipedia, such as Russian, French, German and Japanese, which are inaccessible to Bhutanese. British computer expert Chris Fynn, who created Dzongkha for Linux and worked with the Dzongkha Development Commission, is a Wikipedia enthusiast and was involved in creating the Dzongkha site in 2008. It had an initial burst of 222 articles, but now lies dormant. Other Wikipedians have called for it to be deleted because it is not being used but Fynn has argued for its retention and has prevailed so far. The Dzongkha site offers

possibilities for Bhutan to use for its own purposes, without interference from the English Wikipedia community. Each language Wikipedia determines its own rules.

Wikipedia also meets the criteria for the domains of education, cultural diversity and resilience, and community vitality.

Wikipedia pages are constructed according to what Harvard law professor Yochai Benkler calls 'commons-based peer production' in which large numbers of people cooperate to produce collective, public goods. Bhutan has a strong history of such volunteer labour: from building Thimphu-Phuntsholing highway in the 1960s (Tshering Tashi 2009) to the construction of lhakhangs throughout the nation.

The site works through contributors congregating around topics that interest them, such as history or architecture or farming methods, creating online communities for like-minded people who are geographically separated. Each page has a 'talk' tab on the top right-hand side, which is an online space for discussion about the topic. It operates in some ways like a virtual town square. Anyone with access to the Internet can join in the discussion. This could have wide application in Bhutan, for example: retired civil servants who return to their villages but would still like to contribute their accumulated knowledge in meaningful ways. This form of production is not only sustainable but also efficient, not requiring constant economic subsidization (Benkler, 2006, p. 107) and utilizing the intellectual capital of the nation. His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, referred to this aspect of the country's wealth in his speech at the 10th convocation of the Royal University of Bhutan in 2015.

'Your education will be a great asset to you, and more importantly, it will be of immense benefit to the country,' His Majesty told graduates. 'It will take a lot of effort to preserve our remarkable heritage, but it will be extremely easy to let it erode. Therefore, it is our duty to nurture, reinforce, and pass down our rich heritage to the succeeding generations.'

Increasingly Wikipedia is being used as a teaching tool worldwide, and as the Internet continues to reach further into Bhutan's more remote areas, this offers educational opportunities. Over 400 universities in the US and Canada and universities in 94 countries outside North America have used Wikipedia in the classroom. Over 6,000 students contributed to Wikipedia as part of the 2016 Year in Science program (McKenzie, 2018). At University of Sydney, medical students update pages about diseases; Indigenous studies students create pages about little-known Aboriginal heroes; architecture students are sent into the community to photograph examples of building styles to upload to existing pages; and chemistry students draw compounds according to Wikipedia protocols. Such examples could provide ideas for educational projects about Bhutanese culture, involving students and their communities. For example, students could be tasked with investigating the histories of their local lhakhangs, including audio recordings of interview with elders, in a range of languages, which could be embedded on the page. This would contribute to cultural diversity and resilience, community vitality, as well as strengthen intergenerational bonds.

Publishing to Wikipedia encourages students to develop self-learning and encourage them to continue doing so beyond formal schooling.

Wikipedia is proving a useful pedagogical tool worldwide, providing an environment where students can learn, test their knowledge, contribute to community knowledge, practice research and develop their writing skills. It offers a real-world environment engaging them with real-world issues while making them accountable to a range of stakeholder views. Rather than students working individually on projects, Wikipedia 'involves collaborative participation rather than isolationist thinking, and research based on production rather than mere critique' (Purdy, 2009, p. 365).

Bhutan's Orality

Bhutan, as a digitally advanced, oral culture offers some new perspectives that could benefit the international community, particularly at this point in media evolution where orality is challenging the dominance of print in developed countries. In Bhutan, orality carries particular value. In Mahayana Buddhism esoteric wisdom and knowledge have been passed from student to teacher by oral transmission in an unbroken lineage from the time of Buddha, more than 2500 years ago, to the present day. Laypeople from outside monasteries may listen to teachings, even without understanding the language the lama is speaking, and gain blessings just from being in the presence of those sounds. It is believed they enter the mind stream, coming to fruition in a later life, according to favourable circumstances and merit. Prayer books used by monks are an adjunct to oral transmissions. They are not interchangeable. The power of the spoken *mantra* also transcends the surface meaning and seed syllables on their own carry spiritual significance.

Even after the introduction of writing, the oral tradition continued as a primary medium for the transmission of

Buddhist teachings. Buddhist scriptures are still committed to memory and a large portion of the meditation instructions are transmitted only orally and have never been written down. Today, the class of orally transmitted instructions, known as 'ear transmission' (snyan brgyud) constitute some of the most esoteric and powerful teachings. Similarly, oral methods such as authorization reading (lung) exposition ('chad pa) and debate (rtsod pa) dominate Himalayan Buddhist pedagogy and systems of examination. Thus, the Buddhist tradition is still an oral tradition (Karma Phuntsho, 2007, pp. 23-4).

This recognition of the sacredness of orality influences both the way Bhutanese view the world as well as their individual daily media practices.

'Although numerous media systems are at our disposal today to share and disseminate information, oral transaction is still very popular. It is a major and perhaps the most favoured conveyance for information. Hence, some modern mass media have effectively replicated the audio-visual qualities of oral communication. The television media to which our population is strongly attracted, for instance, is largely a mechanised extension of the oral practice, where speaker has much greater coverage and the audience remains distant and passive' (Karma Phuntsho, 2006, p. 24).

The modern media landscape reflects Bhutan's orality. Folk tales, lama dances and songs - with their inherent oral orientation – date back to the Zhabdrung Rinpoche and beyond but are still living traditions. While *Kuensel* has played a crucial role in the development of Bhutanese civic life, and continues to do so, and more recently independent newspapers have created a space for themselves, their reach is comparatively small, as successive media impact studies have

consistently shown. Both radio and television are popular, but where connectivity is possible, mobile phones have been almost universally adopted (MIS, 2003, MIS, 2008, BIMIS, 2013, BIMIS, 2017). It is clear from these studies that in the past 15 years, Bhutan has embraced all that the online, digital world has to offer: mobile phones, the Internet and social media platforms. In 2018, 64.8 percent of households have access to the Internet, more than 63 per cent own a smart phone and 4G is available in the larger cities (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2017, p. 77).

According to Tshering Dorji, Bhutan's rich oral traditions are still almost intact, and many villagers are making a direct transition from an oral society to the age of digital communication (2010, p. 93). Citizens who may not be print literate are still well able to use smart phones (Tashi Dema, 2014) and contribute to public discourse via Facebook in their regional languages. In June 2018, while visiting Bhutan, this researcher observed voice-driven phone apps such as WeChat and WhatsApp being widely used in culturally specific ways, such as crowdfunding temple construction in the village of Mongar; distributing oral recordings of village elders; laypeople taking time each day or week to participate in Ngondro teachings with Lamas; political discussion groups; and students abroad staying connected to family groups. Digital media has provided a public space for nation building, public discourse and cultural reinforcement, that allows for a range of literacies. Facebook has become a vital site for social interaction and public discussion and Twitter is a powerful tool for political discourse. Social researcher Gyambo Sithey analysed the use of social media during elections and concluded that it plays a significant role and is now a feature of the Bhutanese political landscape. Of the 2013 election he wrote: 'Thanks to the overarching influence of social media sites, the battle was equally fought at campaign meetings in

remote communities as well as via Facebook and Twitter in urban towns. Every statement made by candidates were scrutinized threadbare on social media; updates on internet containing political accusations were relayed instantly to village meetings. Political parties hurled allegations and counter allegations on a daily basis on Facebook' (p. 230).

The Bhutanese experience doesn't conform to Western notions of literacy. Print literacy was measured at 71.4% in 2017 (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2017), but that recognizes only that those citizens can read and write a short text in any language. It doesn't measure the penetration of print or reading and writing *into* the culture. For some Bhutanese, digital literacy is providing a bridge to print literacy, while for others, it is making print literacy irrelevant to participation in civic life.

In ways that are perhaps unique to Bhutan, the oral aspects of its culture continue to be at the forefront of community life and this is particularly significant as we move further into the digital age. Where the Western world has privileged print over orality, digital literacy is challenging that status. Danish scholars Tom Pettitt, Lars Ole Sauerberg and others have suggested that the digital era is bringing with it a return to the ways of thinking and being of oral cultures. 'Looking from the larger historical vantage, it almost appears as if we are returning to the verbal orientation that preceded the triumph of print' (Birkets, 1994). Sauerberg called it the 'Gutenberg parenthesis', named after the inventor of the printing press and defining the Gutenberg era as a period from the 15th to the 20th centuries as effectively bookmarking the textual era. Pettit went so far as to declare that period as merely a blip, an interruption to the usual flow of human communication, arguing that the web is returning us to our ways of thinking and being in the world which reflected our oral traditions:

flowing and ephemeral (2009). Others have made similar observations.

The Chief Executive Officer of Twitter Dick Costolo said: 'The expanding 'social media' of blogs and even more recently Facebook and Twitter (and others are emerging as this is being written) are restoring the 'unfiltered, multi-directional exchange of information' characteristic of earlier times (2010, as quoted by Viner, 2013).

'If you look at human communication over a longer period than just the past generation or two, it becomes obvious that one-way, broadcast-style 'mass media' isn't the norm at all — instead, the norm is interpersonal or multi-directional communication that shares a lot more with social media such as blogs, Twitter and Facebook. Rather than creating a new communication style, we are actually returning to one' (Ingram, 2013).

Bhutan straddles the two worlds - both a digitally advanced society, which is thoroughly modern in its adoption of modern media, as well as an oral culture.

Conclusion

Unlike printed encyclopaedias, Wikipedia pages are never finished. They are continually being updated and added to, giving collective ownership to the contributors. While print logic is fixed, the ontology of Wikipedia is more fluid, ever evolving as a dynamic, amorphous, network of facts and information and collaboration. It is always an incomplete project, ready to be shaped by new information and new contributors. It sits at the intersection of print and non-print logics and as a digitally advanced, highly oral society, so does

Bhutan. Both manage to accommodate these competing ontologies, which come less naturally to Western cultures that are deeply print-based. While Wikipedia's aim is to provide free public infrastructure of information, perhaps equally important is how it manages those tensions – orality versus literacy in the brave new world of the digital that we have entered, which is a topic of current media scholarship.

Wikipedia has a lot to offer Bhutan –

- as a historical and cultural repository, reflecting and reinforcing its own culture
- a low-cost teaching resource, accessible to schools in remote areas
- a way to present to the world accurate information, ie: Bhutan's own perspective on its culture and history
- a platform for the development of Dzongkha
- a site of inclusion for all Bhutanese languages
- participation in a global knowledge project

Equally, Bhutan has a lot to offer Wikipedia. As well as bringing greater ethnic diversity and better representation from Asia, Bhutan's unique worldview reflects its strong orality, which sits comfortably alongside its use of digital media technologies. If Bhutan as a society chose to embrace Wikipedia, using it to serve its own cultural needs, it could also provide new insights into current practices – both on the massive, highly-competitive and robust English site, as well as how it might develop the Dzongkha site. Further, the Bhutanese can demonstrate new ways that Wikipedia can utilize its audio and video capabilities to include oral cultures. This could have wide application for the international community as well as serving the original vision of the Wikimedia founders for global inclusion and the representation of *all* the world's wisdom.

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Power and Compliance in Rural Bhutanese Society[+]

Fredrik Barth[*]

I am very happy to have this opportunity to discuss some questions concerning social organization and the organization of agricultural labour in Bhutanese rural society. Bhutan is an independent country in the Eastern Himalayas, about the size of Switzerland, with an overwhelmingly Buddhist population of c. 600,000 persons. Having never been under any foreign administration, and despite recent modern developments, it has maintained a high degree of isolation through most of its history. It thus offers an opportunity to study a living case of a highly distinctive form of agrarian society.

The materials on which my presentation is based derive from anthropological fieldwork during 1989-95 by Unni Wikan and

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[+] Editor's Note: This paper was written for and presented at Yale University, Program on Agrarian Reform, on 16 April 1999. It was marked, "Preliminary Draft. Not for citation or publication!". We have yet decided to publish it because it is perhaps the first paper on the pre-1958 Bhutanese social structure, and that too by a renowned social scientist. Permission has been given by the author's widow and co-worker, Professor Unni Wikan, Oslo University, Norway.

[*] One of the towering figures of twentieth-century anthropology, Fredrik Barth (1928-2016) was a Norwegian social anthropologist. He was a professor in the Department of Anthropology at Boston University, and had previously held professorships at the University of Oslo, the University of Bergen (where he founded the Department of Social Anthropology), Emory University and Harvard University. He, along with his wife Unni Wikan, were the first anthropologists to do fieldwork in Bhutan in the early 1990s, and this paper is one of the several unpublished works on Bhutan.

myself, partly together and partly separately, during fieldwork totalling 12 months for each over the period 1988-1994, mainly as consultants and advisers to UNICEF for its programme in Bhutan. They have been checked against some recent published and unpublished literature by Bhutanese and foreign scholars.

Only little work of an anthropological or historical nature has been done so far on rural social organization and recent history that could give an authoritative picture of village life and institutions, so my discussion must be very preliminary and tentative. Unni Wikan and I have worked as anthropological consultants, mainly for UNICEF on matters of health, hygiene and sanitation, and mother and child welfare, and were asked to provide extensive base-line information on rural society and life to UN agencies and to national ministries. Happily, valuable work is now beginning to be done by Bhutanese scholars in the form of biographic, local histories and family traditions. Karma Ura has published the life history of a distinguished lama and political figure (*The hero with a thousand eyes: a historical novel*, Thimphu, 1995), and other materials. Most notable is the recently published rich and intimate account by Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck, the Queen of Bhutan, of the traditions of her own distinguished family (*Of rainbows and clouds: the life of yab Ugyen Dorji as told to his daughter*, London, 1999). While I base the following account on materials I have myself collected, I have sought to control their validity and representativeness against such sources.

Bhutan presents the image of a Shangri-La to foreign visitors, with well-mannered and beautifully exotic Buddhists living traditional lives in a stunningly beautiful countryside. Native dress is worn in public, and native architecture is carefully protected and promoted. The government pursues a restrained policy of economic development with international financial

support, emphasizing sustainable resource use and indigenous cultural traditions, and deliberate and enlightened social reform. The following account refers to some of the western and central areas of the country, inhabited by speakers of diverse Tibeto-Burman languages who occupy the middle and higher ranges of the country between c. 2,000 metres and 3,5000 metres altitude, and make up the major historical basis for Bhutanese identity.

A brief historical sketch should frame my account. Bhutan was united during the early 17th century by a Tibetan reincarnate lama who assumed the title of 'Zhabdrung' and based his theocratic state structure on the Drukpa Kagyu monastic order. The Zhabdrung continued to head the state through a series of reincarnations but delegated secular government to a Desi appointed from the monk body for the three-year terms of service. District administration, on the other hand, was placed in the hands of prebendal appointments, largely among the secular notables. In 1907, a notable of one of the elite families established a secular regime with himself as absolute king. Progressively, a modern government administration was built up by successive kings, since the 1950s located in the small capital city of Thimphu; but the country long retained the character of a diarchy of the king's court and the monk body.

The Bhutanese polity in the present century has thus been composed of the following politically powerful social categories:

(i) the king and the royal collaterals.

(ii) The monk body -- partly celibate monks, of the Drukpa Kagyu, living in large monasteries throughout the country, partly monks of the Nyingma order, many of whom are not celibate and found scattered through settlements in the

eastern parts. Monasteries used to own large estates of land, now distributed among the cultivators. Monks are drawn from the population at large, having been given by parent to a monastery at a very young age.

(iii) Lamas (largely non-celibate) of various fame and rank, a few the reincarnate abbots of major temples and monasteries, others living as the heads of communities around temples or small estates.

(iv) Elite families, some formally the owners of large estates, and with histories of association with government.

(v) The mass of the population.

(vi) Since 1961, when the first five-year plan was started and secular schools were established. A modern educated national elite has also developed.

The striking feature of Bhutan until these recent modern changes, however, was that the whole society was based on an agricultural and essentially subsistence economy. Though it constituted a complex, literate, and highly sophisticated traditional Inner Asian civilization, its bases were entirely non-urban and agricultural, only very partially monetized, where all the main units supported themselves in part or entirely by their own agricultural activity. This was true from the King's court and each monastic institution to the most peripheral agro-pastoral households. Above the level of stem family peasant households, and even as an element of many of those households, agricultural work was done primarily by various categories of bonded labour. I shall try to present to you a first sketch of the organization of this agricultural system, and the forms of labour it organized.

Categories of Bonded Labour

Within the mass of the population, there was a range of traditional statuses of very unequal rank and circumstance. Their customary rights and obligations varied between different districts and different lords, but included the following:

Zapa

Slaves, born of *zapa* parents, supplemented till recently by persons abducted and sold by Tibetan traders, and before that also captured from neighbouring Indian areas. *Zapa* were tied to their master's house, sometimes residing in it, sometimes living in small huts around a manor. *Zapa* were fed and clothed by the master and used as labour in the fields, for herding animals, and as domestic servants. They were called every day in the morning for labour and could be required to work till dark; only when their labour was not needed might they, by special dispensation, be allowed in their off hours to engage in work for their own purposes. On large estates, there would be a *drungpa* (drung pa: foreman) appointed, usually among the *zapa*, to administer their daily labour.

Drapa (drva pa)

They were serfs, who provided agricultural labour in return for small plots of land. Such persons, and their offspring, were tied to the land and were used for field labour and other farming tasks. They had to feed themselves by cultivating the plots they had been allotted, at times that did not interfere with their duties on the estate. In addition, they might receive small gifts. A person could enter such a status by being given the use of a plot of land by a landowner; but *drapa* could not revoke their status or leave the land.

Garpa (sgar pa)/Garto (sgar lto)

Courtiers of prominent notables and at the court who were members of the notable's extended household and in charge of specialized functions of the manor such as guards, cooks, housemasters, overseers of stores, etc. Any person could join a notable as a *garpa*; at death the *garpa* had to be replaced by another member of the same family. In return the *garpa*'s family would gain security from its link to a prominent notable.

Srungmapa (srung ma pa)

Vassals or bounded peasants. Such persons were farmers who owed their tax (in labour, kind, and money) to royal collaterals and not to the king/government, making them thus subject to a variable number of arbitrary demands for personal services. This category appeared during the reign of the first king and was composed of families who voluntarily sought protection from royal collateral power centres in Central Bhutan, and once having entered into the relationship, they could not withdraw.

Thralpa (khral pa)

Tax payers, i.e., free farmers who owed their tax directly to the government. This is the only status that exists as a legal category in Bhutan today. The tax of such landowning cultivators is comprised of c. 2 months' labour service on call, a land tax that has varied over time, and various specialized other taxes that have been largely been lifted.

Besides the problems of local variation and a diversity of terminology (simplified to the point of elimination in the above), I am facing a more intractable problem in choosing my

ethnographic or historical moment for this enumeration of statuses. On the one hand, there is a recent history of changing forms, the most significant being the abolition in the late 1950s of all legal basis for the unfree statuses listed above – but not for their frequent voluntary extension into the time of fieldwork in the 1990s. Furthermore, there are the enduring memories and practices of inequality and stigma attaching to these statuses and descent from persons of these statuses, which allow me as an anthropologist to observe something of the institutions of former times. The traditional statuses thus remain (variably) relevant, and sometimes decisive, for social relations of dominance, resistance, and compliance in agricultural labour relations even today.

It is a consistent feature that the duties imposed on all these disadvantaged statuses had to do with labour services – not e.g., crop shares, monetary payments, or political support. This reflects the critical role of labour in Bhutanese agricultural production. In the marginal conditions imposed by high elevation, technological simplicity, and essential self-sufficiency, the output from agriculture is not very high. A major problem is to maintain the productivity of permanent fields. In the easternmost parts of Bhutan, shifting agriculture provided the main answer before the recent introduction of artificial fertilizer; in the culturally dominant areas of the centre and the west a particular combination of forest, livestock, and field management has been developed. Basically, nutrients captured by natural forest and grasses are harvested over large areas by people and by grazing domestic animals and brought into farmed area in the form of pine needles and straw as absorbent in barns and cowsheds, cattle feed, mulch, firewood, and manure. Without this very labour-intensive nutrient transfer from off-farm sources (and in the case of many fields, periods of fallow), soil fertility simply cannot be sustained. In addition, cattle provide draught power for

ploughing and transport, and excess herds increase the supply of butter, a form of value that functioned as a medium of exchange and constitutes a major form of offering/sacrifice at shrines and monasteries.

Units of Agricultural Production

Most peasant agricultural production took, and still takes, the form of subsistence farming on privately owned land, pursued by households based on matrilocal stem families. Usually the property passes undivided to one daughter; occasionally two sisters may divide the land and even the house and live in separate households within the same building. Only in cases where there is no daughter does the house and property pass to a son, producing male owners of houses in c. 20% of the houses in villages I have surveyed. Elite estates, on the other hand, are normally inherited by a son, or divided among the offspring of the owner.

The welfare of a peasant household is heavily dependent on its labour resources. Thus, the main farmer/manager in the matrilocal stem household will be the in-marrying husband; and periods of (modest) family prosperity characteristically come about when an energetic husband/father can direct and coordinate children and capable members of the senior generation as herders, forest product collectors, and seasonal labour. Grown and still unmarried sons, unmarried brothers or brothers-in-law, as well as unmarried wife's sisters, provide the labour surplus that can further enhance wealth. But where family development or illness reduces the labour force, the wealth of the household declines over a few years, and some fields may even go uncultivated. Alternatively, additional labour may be brought in as temporary extensions of the household in the form of more distant poor kin or transient

lower-status farm labourers from distant areas. The wealthiest farming households, however, each maintained their surplus through the permanent servitude of from one to a dozen *drapa* and/or *zapa*.

This, on a vastly expanded scale, provided the basis for the organization and wealth of (2) elite manors. Most spectacularly in the case of the royal households of the two first kings, such residences ran into several hundred persons, mainly *garpa* and *zapa*; in addition, there would be extensive settlements of *drapa* in the locations of the major landed properties, communities of yak-herding *zapa*, and nomadizing *zapa* in charge of large herds of cows and oxen. In the case of the prominent elite households, the corresponding numbers could run to 30-40 adult *zapa* and *drapa* around the manor, with one or a few camps of cattle-herding and yak-herding *zapa* – besides, in some historical periods, the more numerous but economically less integrated *srungmapa* "vassals".

(3) Monasteries and major temples showed a different pattern. Here, of course, the dominant monk population of the institution would be larger, running into 900 in the case of the largest monastery in Punakha. I have no systematic evidence of what the size of the attached population of *zapa* may have been – and there are to my knowledge, no persons functioning in such a status in any monastery today – but their uses seem to have been both as servants within the monastery and as farm labourers. Beyond that, each monastery or temple was surrounded by a settlement of *drapa* serfs, many of them still in place. These *drapa* were the devotees and supporters of the leading teachers in the sacred institution: they would thus both be religious disciples, or lay monks of the Nyingma order, and they would serve as labour and performers to produce the large annual rites and ceremonies staged by such institutions. Being dedicated to religious institutions and performers of

religious works, the general social status of these *drapa* was higher than that of the *drapa* of secular elites.

The wealth of monasteries and temples was sustained by other sources in addition to the agro-pastoral production they organized, mainly a flow of donation, gifts of land or wealth pledged at death, and payments (in kind and in other forms of wealth) for major ritual services. Now after land reform, monastic estates have been reduced to small fraction of their former size, and the government provides the major part of the institutions' running expenses over the national budget.

Conditions of Servitude

In addition to the hard labour, poverty, and lack of freedom suffered by *zapa* and *drapa*, they were also highly stigmatized by the rest of the population – so much so that the King, at the time of his abolition of the statuses, also made it a punishable offence to call anyone *zapa* or *drapa*. This, naturally, makes it difficult to collect accounts and traditions of their life and social position. But the following extracts from the recollections of older people give a sense of their situation.

In the first, an old woman *zapa* belonging to one of the most influential farmer household of a village is speaking:

Did you get the same food as other members of the house were eating?

> Dasho (a title of esteem) and his children would be eating separately. For the rest of the family, we would get together and eat. So, it was the same food. Special food was prepared for Dasho and his children. All the other adults in the family eat the same food.

Were you treated like family members?

> We were all treated like family members. We are all members of the Dasho's family. However, we cannot be equal to Dasho, his wife and children.

So, you were not treated equally?

> That cannot be. Dasho and his children are fortunate and endowed with merit. We cannot be treated equally. If we claim so, it shows lack of loyalty and sincerity and lack of faith in the law of cause and effect. They are superior and we are inferior. It is our karma that made us. We cannot claim more than what heaven has given us.

Some comments may be useful to explain these remarks. Firstly, the concept of "family" that the informant uses does not carry the sense of being of one blood, but is one of "being of one happiness-and-suffering", i.e. an intimate sense of joint living. "The law of cause and effect" and "karma" are two expressions for the same concept: that a person's life circumstances are the effect of actions in pervious lives that have produced a legacy of merit and de-merit accumulated from those earlier incarnations.

Pursuing these Buddhist philosophical premises as I have heard them expressed in daily discourse in Bhutan leads to the following exegesis. Within the framework of a concept of karma, all the hardships of a *zapa*'s life will have an embracing cosmological legitimacy: The circumstances of every person's life are deserved, and whatever oppression one suffers is the punishment for wrong acts committed in previous lives – i.e. the *zapa*'s sufferings are the fruits of her own previous actions. The fact of having been born as a human being, and not as one of the multitude other life forms of sentient beings, is already an enormous boon: As a human being you can seek

enlightenment and make moral choices, and thereby improve your karma and the conditions of your future lives, whereas all lower life forms are simply serving out the appropriate punishments for their previous actions, with no opportunity to change their karma by accumulating merit. Human life is likewise, in its essence, suffering; but it comes with the option of pursuing the goal of detachment and seeking enlightenment and accumulating merit. The moral prescription for the *zapa* person in this situation seems to be one of simple compliance, combined with a continuous struggle to act in a manner that gives merit. A *zapa* is, however, somewhat poorly positioned for such purposes, as he or she will be forced to perform tasks that reduce the person's merit, such as ploughing and beating/harrowing the clods turned up by the plough, and thereby killing sentient beings living in the ground. But such acts by a *zapa* can again be seen as aspects of the person's karma and thus may not truly reflect the person's own choices – whereas the adoption of an attitude of compassion towards all these sentient beings (including evil spirits and demons and, of course, oppressive masters) represents enlightenment and will thus enhance the person's merit.

The following are fragments of a second account, collected in the field from an elderly man reminiscing about his time as helper to his father, who was one of the officials in charge of the stores at the court of the second King. The complexity of the palace household as a unit of production and consumption is indicated by the number of officers:

> The *zapa* would do manual work like herding the bulls, ploughing the fields, cutting grass, gardening etc., over them, there was a man appointed as the overseers of the *zapa*, who was capable enough to supervise them in these works. The *drapa* would also have an overseer and they would do field work like harvesting, digging and smashing the clods. The *drapa* were given small areas

of land as their tozhing, (lit.: food-field), and the loan of a bull to plough that field. When there is important work to do in the house of the lord, they must also do that. At other times, they worked on their own field and did not need to work for the load. The lords, on their part, had to give the *drapa* nothing except small gifts and presents occasionally. The *zapa* must be given food and clothes by the lord; as for work, the *zapa* had no right to work for themselves without the permission of the overseer. When the overseer whistles, the *zapa* must come to work…

The *garpa* were those people from other regions who joined the court of the king at their will simply because they needed a family for support. There were also *garpa* who were forced to replace their father or uncle who was a *garpa* before: men who had to carry the hereditary duty involuntarily…

During the rule of the First King the direct subjects of the king were known as *thralpa* while many people in the eastern and central regions were known as *srungmapa* who paid their tax and did their labour for the lords at Wangdicholing and Lam Pelri. To oversee the labour and collection of taxes from these *srungmapa*, an overseer was appointed. In the eastern part, most of the people were *srungmapa*. They had to do all the labour necessary to their lords: taking the cattle to the warmer regions in the winter, and in the summer irrigate the fields, harvest, pound, and transport rice to Wangdicholing. The *drapa* had to do the transplanting of paddy and guarding of the fields from wild animals… The *srungmapa* initially submitted themselves voluntarily. This happened because a lot of them faced harassment and ill treatment from other powerful families. In the olden days, they did not have a social order like we have today, and thus the powerful ones would lawlessly harass others. So they had to find strong support for social security. People became *garpa* for the same reason. In many cases, the families suffered from many enemies if they did not have a *garpa* working for a prominent family of lords.

Both *srungmapa* and *drapa* would come and work under the supervision of a *nyerpa* (treasurer) at the time of harvest. With the treasurer was also another *garpa* called *jajabpa* (bya' rgyab pa:

the paddy authority). Before bringing the harvest to the stores, the treasurer would report to the lord how much paddy the field had yielded and how much is available after covering the necessary expenses in grain. Then, he and the *jajabpa* would summon the *srungmapa* and *drapa* and entrust them each with a certain amount of paddy to be transported. The paddy was strictly measured and the exact amount would have to be submitted to the treasurer.

Among the courtiers, there were some who stayed in the palace serving the lord and some who went out for official tasks. Those who stayed were people like cooks, attendants, horse-masters etc. The horse-master would have servants from *zapa* and *drapa* to lead the horses and mules. The *garpa* who preferred to go out to work were usually assigned to oversee the cultivation of wheat and barley. A senior officer, a chamberlain, also supervised them. These *garpa* would only have to work as supervisors from the beginning of cultivation until harvest of wheat and barley, which would normally last around three months.

Those who served in the palace were called *jarok* ('jar rogs) or *chayok* (phyag g.yog: servant, helper). Some were private and inner attendants, and some worked in the general mess, etc. One was in charge of storing the flour, called flour-treasurer; another was in charge of grinding flour in the mills, called mill-treasurer. There was one called wine-treasurer, who would take care of wine and alcohol. The female *drapa* were assigned the work of making wine and spirits. As for weaving, the *drapa*, and people from neighbouring places, would come to weave. There would also be a responsible person to act as their supervisor. Then there were persons to gossip and entertain the lords, called *kadrolpa* (bka' grol pa).

As for herding the bulls, the *zapa* would do it in turn. When it was time to plough, the *zapa* overseer would come to the field and the *zapa* men must reach the field with the yokes and ploughs… The overseer would know how many bulls were needed, for how long, for each field. There were grazing pastures for the working bulls, called *langbrok*, some to be used during the time of wheat

> cultivation and some during the time of barley. When the *zapa* herding the bulls bring those bulls to the field, the men whose job it was to plough must yoke the oxen they were assigned. The women *zapa* would do such things as fetching water, collecting firewood, weeding etc. After the ploughing, both *zapa* and *drapa* must come to smash the clods and bring and spread manure… There were no such things as weekends. They would get one or two days off when there was not much work to do, but usually they would have to work continuously. For special occasions like holy days or festivals, the overseer would let them go to such events. So the work for *zapa* and *drapa* was almost the same. It is only the difference in their names, and their rights. The *zapa* got clothes and food and *drapa* got only presents bestowed by their lord, use of a plot of land. This is the way work was done in Wangdicholing that I can remember. This is it".

Finally, an account I have obtained from a member of a hereditary lama family in the east-central part of the country, describing the way their formerly bonded labour was organized:

> The former *zapa* of our community are descended from two girls offered as maids to the first lama who settled here, eight generations ago. *Drapa* are different. *Drapa* began like this. As the lama became more known, many people from far and near came to get religious teachings. They heard that lama was good and thus came to be his student and gradually settled here. As they stayed on, some got married to local girls. They would then construct a small house for themselves. Whenever there is important work going on with the lama, they would volunteer to help the lama doing that work. So there grew up a community of *drapa* around the temple…
>
> The rights of the lama are such that, if there is lama's work today, then all the *drapa* can be summoned to come and help in the work. If a large field is to be dug or a forest cleared for cultivation, then all the *drapa* must come and help the lama in his work. If there is a ceremony going on in the temple, the lama calls all of them to come and to do the preparation. Some would come to pound rice, some grind wheat and such, some collect firewood,

some prepare wine and spirits, some pound beaten rice and corn, etc.; When the ceremony begins, those who know the rituals would participate in it while those who don't would serve as cooks and helpers in serving food. These were the duties of our *drapa*. Since *drapa* come from places far away, they do not possess land in the region. So the lama provides them with a small piece of land. The land could be as much as what could be ploughed in a day by an ox. The lama would instruct them to build their house on the plot and cultivate it. When the lama had to pay land tax, they would also help the lama by contributing. This is called *thralrup* (khral rub): it is like a donation.

The tradition of the earlier lords was that they would send *kedum* which are sacks of cotton. For instance, there would be one sent from the house of Wangdicholing and Lampelri. *Garpa* (courtier) would send to distribute the sacks of cotton among the *srungmapa* families here. The bags of cotton would be distributed among his special subjects. The distributed share of cotton is called *tadthag* (stod thag), "entrusted weaving" as the cotton was entrusted as material to be woven into a certain size of cloth… Sometimes, the amount of cotton distributed would be far less, often due to corruption of *garpa*, than that was needed for the size of cloth ordered. People must add cotton to it and weave the right size of cloth. In the case of the lama, he would divide his royal assignment among his capable *drapa*. So the cloth from *drapa* doing the weaving for the lama would be measured and then packed in order to be sent to Wangdicholing and Lampelri… To make up the amount, cotton had to be cultivated, or one would be in trouble when the *tadthag* came. Later, when cotton could be imported from India, people often bought the Indian cotton and added to the trod-thang cotton….

The *zapa* would work for the lama. As for the sons of the *zapa*, if there were two sons, one must always work for the lama. If there is only one, and the parents are old and wretched, they need not do anything. But they may come to help during ceremonies and when there is much work, out of commitment and sympathy… If a family of *zapa* had one son and one daughter, the son would work for 15 days and the daughter for 15 days. It is easier for girls

> to work: if they know how to weave they do that and if not, they help in punning and dyeing. The men must plough the fields with the bulls. If they collect firewood, or dig fields in groups, one man from the temple would accompany them to supervise the work. On such days, they would also be fed special food and drink. I did the supervising many times. There were 36 *zapa* at the time tied to the temple…
>
> Every year, clothes were given. It was called logo, annual garment. We would give new clothes if we had, or else old ones that we had worn ourselves.

Extracting Compliance

In such a pattern of organization of agricultural labour, the problem of discipline and compliance is critical. The contrast to share-cropping contracts is instructive. The sharecropper is ipso facto serving his own interests by working hard and effectively, and the extraction of the owner's share takes place at the moment of harvest only. Bonded labour, on the other hand, has no interest in the product, and must be directed and supervised as every unit of labour is extracted. Supplementary sanctions may take the form of bonuses and fines. It could also take the form of force and of giving them into slavery under a more prominent lord. In Bhutan in the case of *srungmapa*, who composed households of cultivators, fines were used, as they were against delinquents in the population at large.

> Sometimes, a *garpa* (courtier) would be sent to their home to collect fines…. There was no fixed norm for the fines and so they would vary from person to person and the types of offences. The *garpa* known as *chadpa'i garpa* (chad pa'i sgar pa), "gar-pa-for-fines" would come and squat on a mat before the oven and demand an incredible amount of fine (as well as hospitality). They would obstinately stick to the mat and refuse to move unless their wishes were satisfied…. Sometimes the family did not have enough money, grains or clothes to pay and the *garpa* would

> therefore stay on, demanding, for months continuously. (Informant III)

Several such incidents are vividly described by Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck (1999).

The small gifts that are reported to have been given during the year can be seen as a form of encouragement to *zapa* and *drapa* to do their work well. The informant II, reporting on a large estate, notes how … "the quality and amounts of annual clothes and gifts would depend upon the records submitted by the supervisor about how well they served the lords." But with the level of poverty that characterized the lives of *zapa* and *drapa*, the threat to seize property as punishment for non-compliance would have little force, and withholding beyond the bare minimum of clothing and meals to extract labour would be self-defeating. Unless the labourer in such a relationship decides by his own volition to work up to the level of conventional standard, it seems to me that the only available sanction is physical punishment.

This was also the ultimate sanction to secure the permanence of the owner's rights to the bondsman's labour.

Could they flee and escape somehow?

> They could not. Let alone escaping, even if they said that they wished to leave, they would be reprimanded very severely. If they escaped, the lord sent men to chase and arrest them. They were punished very harshly and sometimes a mark would be drawn on their faces so that they cannot escape again… So, there were not many who would revolt and those who did were severely punished… The lords of former days were cruel. People are very fortunate nowadays… That is all about the lords and their activities. They could live only by making cows, horses, *zapa*, *drapa* and their *srungmapa*s work. (Informant III).

When the King in the late 1950s ensured legal freedom to everyone, and land allotments to the landless, there was large-scale exodus of former *drapa* and *zapa* from the communities in which they had been bonded. Yet I have also found that some former *zapa* and *drapa* have chosen to remain with their former masters and continued the same relations of labour as before - so there is direct evidence, both of discontent and acceptance. Comparative materials on compliance and resistance in similar bonded relations would be very useful for reconstructing the salient features influencing this system of labour. I would very much appreciate a discussion that clarifies for me important factors to look for in these materials.

A Note on Tsangmo, a Bhutanese Quatrain[+]

Dorji Penjore[*]

Introduction

The villages of Shingkhar and Wamling in Zhemgang District decided to celebrate the 2007 New Year by organizing an archery match. On the second day of the match held at Shingkhar, the women were taking a break from dancing and singing folksongs when a woman from Wamling sang one *tsangmo*, and without being asked, a woman from Shingkhar responded … until the women from one village ran out of tsangmo.

Tsangmo (gtsang mo) is the most popular Bhutanese oral tradition after folktales (srung). Other oral performance like folksongs are sung or danced mostly during village festivals or new year (blo gsar), whereas tsangmo is sung almost every day as young people go about their work, fetching water from fountains or ponds, collecting firewood, fodder, and leaf-litters, herding cattle, running errands to next villages, travelling to attend village meetings, and on the farm ploughing and digging land, sowing seeds, and weeding and harvesting crops. Such was the popularity of tsangmo then. But not anymore.

[+] This paper is an extract from an introduction to *Tsangmo: A Spontaneous Outpouring of the Bhutanese Emotions* (forthcoming), the English translation of tsangmo from Shingkhar and Wamling villages, Zhemgang.

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Meaning

The meaning of tsangmo depends on whether it is spelt *gtsang mo* or *rtsang mo*. Dzongkha Development Authority (2005) defines *rtsang mo* as expressive lyrics or poems expressing personal moods or feelings. One of the meanings of *rtsang* is 'secret', and the addition of gender *mo* (female) makes it a 'secret lady'. The second word *gtsang* means 'pure', 'clean', 'tidy', or 'beauty', including the Tibetan province of Tsang. When *mo* is added, it means a 'pure girl', a 'beautiful lady'. Tsangmo surely must have begun as a eulogy to a lady whether she is a 'secret lady' or a 'lady of beauty'. Goldstein (2001) describes *gtsang mo* as the lady from Tsang province. One popular tsangmo sung in Bhutan plays with the word *gtsang* to connote Tsang province as well as the lady.

གཙང་མོ་གཙང་ནས་ཡོང་ཡོང་།།
གཙང་མོ་ལྷ་དང་འདྲ་སོང་།།
དགོན་པ་ལ་ལུ་སྐྱེབ་ཚེ།།
གཙང་མོ་སྤྲུལ་པ་ལ་འགྱུར་སོང་།།

gtsang mo gtsang nas yong yong//
gtsang mo lha dang 'dra song//
dgon pa la lu sleb tshe//
gtsang mo sprul'u la 'gyur song//

A woman coming from Tsang
Is similar to a goddess
Until she arrived at Gonpa La
Where she turned into a monkey.

Origin

While the tradition of composing folksongs using a four-line form may be old and common to the Himalaya regions influenced by Vajrayana Buddhism, the genre was perhaps popularised by the Sixth Dalai Lama Tsangyang Gyatso (tshangs dbyangs rgya mtsho, b.1683-d.1706) both in Tibet and the surrounding regions. The original or adaptation of his love songs are found in the compilation of the Bhutanese tsangmo and they are still sung in remote villages like Shingkhar and Wamling.

The tsangmo below was sung by a woman from Shingkhar village without any knowledge about Rigzin Tshewang Gyatso, a corruption of Tsangyang Gyatso.

པོ་ཏ་ལ་རུ་བཞུགས་པའི།།
རིག་འཛིན་ཚེ་དབང་རྒྱ་མཚོ།།
ལྷ་བསང་གནང་བ་མནོ་སོང་།།
དཔེ་ཆ་རླུང་གི་ཁེར་སོང་།།

po ta la ru bzhugs pa'i//
rig 'dzin tshe dbang rgya mtsho//
lha bsang gnang ba mno song//
dpe cha rlung gi kher song/

Rigzin Tshewang Gyatso
Residing at the Potala Palace
Thought of performing a lhabsang ritual
But the wind blew off the scripture.

Born to Lama Tashi Tenzin, a descendant of Pema Lingpa (pad ma gling pa, b.1450–d.1521), near Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh bordering eastern Bhutan, Tsangyang Gyatso was brought up and educated in the Nyingma school tradition. The death of the Fifth Dalia Lama (ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, b.1617–d.1682) was kept as a state secret by the fifth regent Desi Sangay Gyatso (sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, b.1653–d.1705), similar to Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal (zhabs drung ngag dbang rnam rgyal, b.1594-d.1651) in Bhutan whose death was hidden for half a century. Although Tsangyang Gyatso was discovered as the Fifth Dalai Lama's reincarnation in 1688, it was not until 1697 that both his death and his reincarnation were revealed. By that time, Tsangyang Gyatso was already 14, old enough to have experienced the 'world'. After taking a novice's vow he was enthroned as the Sixth Dalai Lama that same year. But the murder of the regent Desi Sangay Gyatso in 1701 by the Mongol overlord Lhazang Khan upset him. He renounced his novice monk's vow at 18 and gave up his studies. It is said that Tsangyang Gyatso had always rejected the life of a monk without abdicating the position of the Dalai Lama. He continued his childhood lifestyle of a Nyingma monk even after his enthronement at Potala. He had many secret lovers whom he would visit at night (it is probable that the word tsangmo must have originated from his many secret lovers, *rtsang mo*), took to drinking wine, spending nights with women in the streets of Lhasa, composing and singing amorous and sensual poems. His lifestyle, including his love poems, went against the principles of the Gelug School and the institution of Dalai Lama.

Tsangyang Gyatso is one of the most loved Dalai Lamas, for it is believed he was born to test the faith of the Tibetan people. One of his enduring legacies is the collection of some of the most beautiful love poems ever composed by a notable Tibetan Buddhist personage. According to Tatz (1981), Tsangyang

Gyatso's love songs are the literary adaptation of a Tibetan folk genre which itself is based on four-line folksongs, and the verses were adopted as popular songs later.

It is not uncommon for the Bhutanese elders to sing Tsangyang Gyatso's love songs, and tsangmo presented here and elsewhere echo some of his love songs. For example, tsangmo from Shingkhar produced below is similar to one of Tsangyang Gyatso's songs (Dhondup, 2002).

ཡི་དམ་ལྷ་ཡི་ཞལ་རས།།

སེམས་ལུ་འཆར་ནི་མིན་འདུག།

སྨན་ཆུང་བུ་མོའི་ཞལ་རས།།

སེམས་ལུ་ལྷང་ལྷང་དྲན་མས།།

yi dam lha yi zhal ras//
sems lu 'char ni min 'dug//
sman chung bu mo'i zhal ras//
sems lu lhang lhang dran mas//

The face of a meditation deity
Comes not to my mind,
But the face of a girl
Often comes into my mind.

བསྒོམ་བའི་ལྷ་མའི་ཞལ་རས།།

ཡིད་ལ་འཆར་རྒྱུ་མི་འདུག།།

མ་བསྒོམ་བྱམས་པའི་ཞལ་རས།།

ཡིད་ལ་ཡང་ཡང་རྟོན་བྱུང་།།

bsgom ba'i bla ma'i zhal ras//
yid la 'char rgyu min 'dug//
m bsgom byams pa'i zhal ras//
yid la yang yang shar byung//

Even if meditated upon,
The face of my lama comes not to me,
But again and again comes to me
The smiling face of my beloved.

Structure and Form

Every tsangmo is a quatrain, a stanza with four lines. Unlike quatrain, which mostly forms a stanza of a longer poem, every tsangmo is a complete poem by itself. Each line is a trimeter, a metre with three feet. Most tsangmo rhymes in aabb, abcb, or often abcd. Each tsangmo has two couplets and each couplet is a self-contained entity—the first couplet usually makes a statement or describes a situation; the second couplet concludes or summarizes the point made by the first. In some cases, the first couplet throws problem or tension while the second couple resolves it, positively or negatively, depending on the nature of tsangmo. In some verses, the first couplet contains a simile or metaphor for actual character or context of the second couplet.

Picture in Verse

Tsangmo is a picture in verse. Their rich imageries and metaphors create sensory experience for listeners. It evokes mental images, visual senses as well as sensations and emotions, figurative or literal, of concrete things, real or imagined, of nature, of local contexts as well as of distant places. Tsangmo is beaten in brevity but not in imageries by a

Japanese poem, *haiku*, a shortest form of poetry with its symmetrical structure of five-seven-five syllables.

Below are the two examples of *haiku*.

like the sound
of a mountain torrent
new rice wine
- Seiun

as I walk
fallen leaves
the only sound
- Hisajo

Performance

Tsangmo is seldom recited or sung alone, but sung over a contest engaging opponents who could be lovers, adversaries, or friends. Competition is normally held between two opposite sexes or people from different villages or groups. Each will respond depending on the nature of the preceding one. There will be a winner or a draw. Messages are never conveyed directly, but through articulate use of metaphors and symbols.

Themes

Tsangmo can be divided into two categories: The first category is about what I call the tsangmo of love; the second is the tsangmo of hatred although many tsangmo defy these broad categories. Most tsangmo are poets' reflection and expression of their feelings and emotions about their frustration and disillusionment; advice to their partners; libel and criticism; deceit; rejection; amorous desire; frustration; destiny;

happiness; injustice; and in general, the whole world conspiring to separate two lovers.

Local Adaptation

Many versions of the same tsangmos are sung in different villages. Like folktales, tsangmo too have been adapted to local contexts, resulting in many versions of the same tsangmo sung in different parts of the country. In Shingkhar and Wamling villages tsangmo are sung either in classical Tibetan (chos skad), Dzongkha, or Khengkha. More than half of the tsangmo sung in Shingkhar and Wamling villages are in Khengkha. The understanding of the local tsangmo requires adequate knowledge of the locality and social-cultural and political milieu in which they were composed.

ཤིང་མཁར་དཔལ་ལྡན་བཟང་མོ།།
རྟ་ན་ཤན་ཟིག་གའི་ཏ།།
བུ་ལི་ཐར་པ་ལྷ་མོ།།
བྲང་ཏོ་ཀབ་སི་དར་པ།།

Shing mkhar dpal ldan bzang mo//
rta na shan zig ga'i ta//
bu li thar pa lha mo//
brang to kab si dar pa//

Palden Zangmo of Shingkhar
Is travelling by riding a horse
Tharpa Lhamo of Buli
Is left behind, beating her chest.

For example, one Khengkha tsangmo above explains how Tharpa Lhamo, the wife of Buli Ponpo, had to remain helplessly

and heart-broken in Buli village while her husband's mistress Palden Zangmo of Shingkhar village, accompanied him in his travels.

Functions

Tsangmo serves different functions in different social spaces and occasions. It is the medium of communication for the young people—today's equivalent of cellular phones and emails—for initiating, accepting, and declining romantic advances. It is used for expressing love or hate; ridiculing and praising partners; reflecting on the Buddhist doctrines of impermanence, life and death; raising up one's status by flattening opponent's ego. In an oral society where the power of words and speech is valued, tsangmo and *lozey* are helpful in expressing one's ideas clearly and persuasively. True test of one's literacy and learning was then the knowledge of oral literature. It is indeed an additional social and cultural skill.

Interpretation and Translation

Tsangmo is capable of multiple interpretations. There are as many versions of tsangmo sung in different parts of Bhutan as there are interpretations. That it is capable of multiple interpretations and meanings is tsangmo's main strength; otherwise tsangmo as a literary form could have been long dead. Perhaps, this is how the poets or tsangmo composers wanted to achieve poetic height and render them timeless. Below is my English rendition of 20 tsangmo sung during the contest between the women from Shingkhar and Wamling in Zhemgang in 2007.

1

ལྷ་ཤིང་ཤུག་པའི་རྩེ་ལ།།
ཁུ་བྱུག་སྔོན་མོ་ཆགས་སོང་།།
ཡིད་འཕྲོག་ལྷ་མོའི་ཕྱོགས་ལ།།
གཞོན་པའི་བློ་སེམས་ཆགས་སོང་།།

lha shing shug pa'i rtse la//
khu byug sngon mo chags song//
yid 'phrog lha mo'i phyogs la//
gzhon pa'i blo sems chags songs//

On a juniper tree
A blue cuckoo has landed.
Towards an enchanting lady
This young heart has fallen.

2

བྱ་ཅིག་གནམ་ལུ་ཕུར་སོང་།།
སྤྲོང་ངར་ས་ལ་ལུས་སོང་།།
བྱ་མོ་དམ་ཚིག་ཡོད་ན།།
སྤྲོང་ངར་བསྐོར་བ་རྒྱབ་ཤོག།།

bya cig gnam lu phur song//
sgong nga sa la lus song//
bya mo dam tshig yod na//
sgong nga bskor ba rgyab shog//

A bird has flown
Leaving behind an egg;
If the mother bird has a commitment
Please come hovering above the egg.

3

བ་ལུ་སུ་ལུའི་ནང་ལུ།།
བྱི་འུ་ཆུང་སྐལ་བཟང་སྒྲོལ་མ།།
གཏན་ཀྱང་སྐྱོ་སྟེ་མི་སྡོད།།
དགའ་བའི་དུས་ཅིག་ཤར་འོང་།།

ba lu su lu'i nang lu//
byi'u chung skal bzang sgrol ma//
gtan kyang skyo ste me sdod//
dga' ba'i dus cig shar 'ong//

Inside *balu sulu* [azela]
Little nestling Kalzang Dolma
Will not remain unhappy forever:
Happy times will come.

4

རྟ་ཕོ་ཨེར་ཁ་སིང་སིང་།།
མཐོ་བའི་ལ་མོ་བརྒལ་སོང་།།
སྨན་ཆུང་མིག་ཆུ་འཁྱིལ་འཁྱིལ།།
རང་གི་ལུང་པར་ལུས་སོང་།།

rta pho aer kha sing sing//
mtho ba'i la mo brgal song//
sman chung mig chu 'khyil 'khyil//
rang gi lung par lus song//

A stallion, its bell ringing,
Has crossed a mountain pass;
A tearful girl
Has to remain in my village.

5

སྙིང་གྲོགས་མཛེས་ལྡན་ལྷ་མོ།།
ལ་མོའི་རྒྱབ་ཏུ་ལུས་སོང་།།
བཅོ་ལྔའི་ཟླ་ཤལ་མཉམ་དུ།།
མཇལ་རྒྱུ་ཡོད་ན་དགའ་སོང་།།

snying grogs mrdzes ldan lha mo//
la mo'i rgyab tu lus song//
bco lnga'i zla shal mnyam du//
mjal rgyu yod na dga' song//

A goddess-like companion of my heart
Has been left behind the mountain
I would be happy
If she also rises along with the full moon.

6

སེམས་པ་ཕ་ལ་ཤོར་རུང་།།
ལུས་པོ་ཚུ་ལ་ལུས་སོང་།།
ང་ལ་ཐང་དཀར་རྒོད་པའི།།
གཤོག་སྒྲོ་གཡར་རོགས་གནང་ཤོག།།

sems pa pha la shor rung//
lus po tshu la lus song//
nga la thang dkar rgod pa'i//
gshog sgro g.yar rogs gnang shog//

Though my heart has fallen there
My body is here
Lend to me please
The wings of Thangkar vulture.

7

ཕྱི་ཡི་སྐུ་གཟུགས་དཀར་བ།།
ནང་གི་ཐུགས་སེམས་བཟང་བ།།
ཡིད་འོང་ཕྱི་དཀར་ནང་བཟང་།།
ཤེལ་དཀར་བུམ་པ་འདྲ་སྟོང་།།

phyi yi sku gzugs dkar ba//
nang gi thugs sems bzang ba//
yid 'ong phyi dkar nang bzang/
shel dkar bum pa 'dra song//

Without, her body is white
Within, her thought is noble
White without and noble within
My girl is similar to a glass vase.

8

ལྕང་མོ་ཕར་ལ་སྒུར་སྒུར།།
བྱི་ཏུ་ཆུང་ཚུར་ལ་སྒུར་སྒུར།།
སྒུར་ན་མཉམ་ཅིག་སྒུར་ཤོག།
མ་སྒུར་རང་རང་སོ་སོ།།

lcang mo phar la sgur sgur//
byi'u chung tshur la sgur sgur//
sgur na mnyam cig sgur shog//
ma sgur rang rang so so//

A willow bows in one direction
A sparrow bows in the other
Each wanting to bow, let's bow together
If not, let's bow separately.

9

ཆུ་མོ་ཕར་གྱི་ལོགས་ལ།།
བུ་ཆུང་སྐྱོ་བ་མ་གནང།།
ང་ལ་བརྩེ་གདུང་ཡོད་ན།།
བྱམས་པའི་ཟམ་པ་རྐྱབ་ཤོག།

chu mo phar gyi logs la//
bu chung skyo ba ma gnang//
nga la brtse gdung yod na//
byams pa'i zam pa rkyab shog//

Lad, on the other side of the river,
Please don't be sad!
If you care for me
Build a bridge of kindness.

10

ཁྱོད་གཟུགས་པད་མའི་སྡོང་པོ།།
འཁྲུལ་པ་མེད་པར་བཞུགས་གནང།།
གཡུ་སྦྲང་ང་རང་འཁོར་ས།།
ཁྱོད་ལས་ལྷག་པ་མིན་འདུག།

khyod gzugs pad ma'i sdong po//
'khrul pa med par bzhugs gnang//
g.yu sbrang nga rang 'khor sa//
khyod las lhag pa min 'dug//

Your lotus pistil-like body
Please stay unchanged;
There is no place other than you
For me, a turquoise bee, to land.

11

སྤང་གི་ཤ་བ་གཡུ་མོ།།
ཐུགས་ལ་སྐྱོ་བ་མ་གནང་།།
སྤང་གཤོང་གཡས་ཀྱི་ལོགས་ལ།།
སྤང་རྩྭ་སྤང་ཆུ་འཁྱིལ་ཡོད།།

spang gi sha ba g.yu mo//
thugs la skyo ba ma gnang//
spang gshong g.yas kyi logs la//
spang rtsva spang chu 'khyil yod//

Turquoise-coloured deer of the meadow,
Please don't be sad!
Grass and water abound
On the right side of the meadow.

12

ཆུས་མོ་གཙང་བའི་ཆུ་ནང།།*
ཨོའི་བ་སློང་མཁན་ར་ཏ།།
རང་སེམས་དགའ་བའི་མི་ན།།
དཀྲོགས་ལི་རྐྱབ་མཁན་ར་ཏ།།

chus mo gtsang ba'i chu nang//
ao'i ba slong mkhan ra ta//
rang sems dga' ba'i mi na//
dkrogs li rkyabs mkhan ra ta//

There is someone making
Pure water muddy
There is someone interfering
With the person I love.

13

ཁུ་བྱུག་གསུང་སྐད་སྙན་པ།།
ཚེ་སྔོན་ལས་ཀྱིས་བསྐོས་པ།།
ཁུ་བྱུག་ལྷ་ཤིང་གཉིས་ཀ།།
འབྲལ་དགོས་བསམ་པ་མིན་འདུག།

khu byug gsung skad snyan pa//
tshe sngon las kyis bskos pa//
khu byug lha shing gnyis ka//
'bral dgos bsam pa min 'dug//

A Cuckoo is melodious
Because of her karma
Both the Cuckoo and the Divine tree
Have no thought to part.

14

ངང་པ་འདམ་ལུ་ཆགས་ཏེ།།
སྡོད་དགོ་མཉོ་ཞིག་ཡོད་པ།།
མཚོ་མོ་གཡོ་བའི་ཤུགས་ཀྱིས།།
ཁོ་ཐག་ལས་ཀྱིས་ཆད་སོང་།།

ngang pa 'dam lu chags te//
sdod dgo mno wa cig yod pa//
mtsho mo g.yo ba'i shugs kyis//
kho thag las kyis chad song//

A swan has a mind
To dwell in the mud
But the waves of a lake
Overwhelms the swan with regret.

15

མཛུབ་དཀྱི་གསེར་གྱི་མཛུབ་དཀྱི།།
གཡུ་གསུམ་ཤོང་བའི་མཛུབ་ཀྱི།།
ས་བོན་ལུང་བསྟན་ཡོད་ན།།
སྙིང་པོ་ལམ་འཇུག་རྐྱབ་ཤིག།།

mdzub dkyi gser gyi mdzub dkyi//
g.yu gsum shong ba'i mdzub kyi//
sa bon lung bstan yod na//
snying po lam 'jug rkyab shig//

A gold ring
Holding three turquoises:
Give it as a gift for the journey
If there is any destiny.

16

གངས་ལས་འབབ་པའི་ཆུ་མོ།།
མ་འབབ་ང་རང་དགའ་སོང་།།
བབས་ཚེ་ཟམ་པའི་འོག་ལུ།།
སྐྱོ་མོ་ལས་ཀྱིས་འཁོར་སོང་།།

gangs las 'bab pa'i chu mo//
ma 'bab nga rang dga' song//
babs tshe zam pa'i 'og lu//
skyo mo las kyis 'khor song//

I will be happier
If a mountain river doesn't descend
Once down, it flows under a bridge:
Then the sadness naturally overwhelms.

17

བྱག་གི་སྐྱོ་རོགས་འུག་པ།།
ཆུ་ཡི་སྐྱོ་རོགས་ཉ་མོ།།
ལས་དན་སྤྲང་པོ་ང་ལ།།
སྐྱོ་རོགས་འབད་མི་མིན་འདུག།

byag gi skyo rogs 'ug pa//
chu yi skyo rogs nya mo//
las ngan sprang po nga la//
skyo rogs 'bad mi min 'dug//

A cliff's grieving partner is the owl
A river's grieving partner is the fish
None will be a grieving partner
To this miserable beggar.

18

ཡར་ཡར་རི་གསུམ་རྩེ་ལ།།
ཤ་བ་ཡར་འགྲོ་མར་འགྲོ།།
ཡར་འགྲོ་རྩྭ་ཡང་མ་ཟ།།
མར་འགྲོ་ཆུ་ཡང་མ་འཐུང་།།

yar yar ri gsum rtse la//
sha ba yar 'gro mar 'gro//
yar 'gro rtsva yang ma za//
mar 'gro chu yang ma 'thung//

On the top of three hills
A deer moves up and down:
She neither ate grass while going up
Nor drank water while going down.

19

ཤར་རིའི་རྩེ་ལས་འཐོན་པའི།།
ཁྲི་གདུགས་ཉི་མའི་དཀྱིལ་འཁོར།།
ནུབ་རི་ཕྱོགས་ལུ་གཡོ་ཚེ།།
འགྲོ་བ་ཀུན་གྱིས་ཕངས་མས།།

shar ri'i rtse las 'thon pa'i//
khri gdugs nyi ma'i dkyil 'khor//
nub ri phyogs lu g.yo tshe//
'gro ba kun gyis phangs mas//

All beings feel the loss
Of the sun
Rising from the east
When it turns towards the west.

20

དཀར་ཡོལ་དཀར་སངས་གཅིག་ལས།།
ཟ་རུང་མཉམ་ཅིག་ཟ་གེ།།
ལ་མོ་གུང་ཐང་ལ་མོ།།
བརྒལ་རུང་མཉམ་ཅིག་བརྒལ་གེ།།

dkar yol dkar sangs gcig las//
za rung mnyam cig za ge//
la mo gung thang la mo//
brgal rung mnyam cig brgal ge//

Let us eat together,
Sharing from one porcelain cup;
Together, let us cross
The Gungthang La pass.

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