

Editorial

To be or not to be a man

Women in Bhutan have always enjoyed a special place in the Bhutanese community, home and family. She was protected from harsh realities of old Bhutan. When men went out to the fields to till the soil women generally stayed home doing what had been considered a precious chore – nursing the baby and keeping the home fire burning. Therefore, her role evolved into one, which managed “inner affairs” earning the Bhutanese term for women – *Nang gi Aum*.

With development and modernization, new realities are emerging, some provoked by western undertones. Bhutan is driven to jump the bandwagon of Gender Equality. It is a signatory to the convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Not to jump the bandwagon could be construed as not being a progressive society.

But the fact is, the world for our *Nang gi Aums* is now opening up beyond the “inner affairs”. Development has opened up prospects for Bhutanese women. Although in fewer numbers, today we have women in all spheres of development – doctors, engineers, politicians, bureaucrats, entrepreneurs, judges, teachers and so on and so forth.






Understandably, when Bhutan is gradually transforming into a modern nation state, concepts such as ‘gender equality’ is at the risk of being



misinterpreted. Misinterpretations may manifest into behaviors such as refusing to undertake the basic motherly nursing of a baby or demanding to be let into a Goengkhang. Equality is not necessarily being the same.

As a society, today, we are living the consequences of our decisions made thirty years ago. Our parents decided that girls should not venture to schools as it involved possible encounters with the wild animals and walking the rough terrains. Hence, we have to make do with fewer women judges, doctors and engineers. Things are different today. Schools are at the center of every village. Girl child now dominates enrolment in pre primary schools. Even when Bhutanese women especially in the urban areas live deeply conscious of their right to gender equality, their sisters in the villages have not changed one of their consistent prayers - the prayer to be born as men in the next rebirth.

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Course In Focus - DFM

DIPLOMA COURSE IN FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT (DCFM)



Objectives: The DCFM aims to assist public and private organizations by:

- building the strengths of human resources in the areas of finance and accounts
- developing the auditing skills required in executing the auditing tasks of the government and corporate organizations.
- meeting the requirement of the skilled human resources in the areas of accounting in corporate and private sectors.

Duration: 24 months (From July, every year)

Designed for: Class XII (passed) candidates of commerce background who have been selected to pursue career in the areas of accounting and auditing selected through the selection process of the DCFM.

Learning Areas: (a) Intensive training in the areas of accounts and auditing is offered as reflected below for a period of twelve months.

- Office Management
- Commercial Accounting (theory & Practice)
- IT Applications
- Personnel Management
- Government Financial Management System
- Cost Accounting

- Revenue Accounting and Auditing
- Tax administration
- Companies Act
- Effective Communication
- BAS (Budgeting and Accounting System)
- Govt. Accounting (Principle and Practice)
- Auditing (General & Government)

(b) The second year, trainees of DCFM are attached with different government and private organizations to gain practical knowledge in the field for the period of nine months. For three months, it is mandatory for all the trainees (government or private candidates) to undergo field attachment with the Royal Audit Authority.

Learning Outcome: Upon the completion of the course the participants will be able to carry out:

- the job responsibilities of deputy chief accountant (DCA) in the National Finance Service.
- the job responsibilities of senior accountant in corporate and private sectors.
- auditing responsibilities in Royal Audit Authority
- the roles of assistant tax administrator and assistant revenue officer in Department of Revenue and Customs (DRC)

Gender - A Perspective

By Norbu Wangchuk, RIM



"As in Tibet, so also in Bhutan, women did not have an inferior place in a social system...Marriages were contracted by agreement between the parties... Polyandry attached no

*disgrace to the plurality of husbands. (However), birth of a son was preferred to a daughter. ...Religious sanctions precluded the entry of a female into a dzong at certain hours."*¹

Unlike women in many parts of the world, Bhutanese women do not suffer from gender discrimination. Women in Bhutan enjoy equal status with their male counterpart and have equal freedom under the laws of the country. Bhutan has also ratified the International Convention on elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

Bhutanese women constitute 49.5% of the country's 716,424 population² and they play a significant role in the development of the country. Increasingly Bhutanese women are assuming prominence in the economic and social fabric of the Bhutanese society as teachers, farmers, entrepreneurs, doctors, engineers, decision makers, politicians and civil servants.

However there does exist a subdued gender bias that stem from socio-cultural perceptions. According to one study, some rural women still strongly believed that men are higher than women by nine "noble" human—births. Almost all rural women in the study said they prefer to be born male³. These perceptions validate male superiority and fail to recognize female capabilities.⁴

Women's, limited mobility and the 'double burden of family and economic responsibility'⁵ have also contributed to the gender bias that exists especially in the rural areas. As a result, the benefits of development and progress have, to some extent by-passed women especially in the rural areas.

"Although the benefits of development have been widely shared, we must recognize that there are still groups within our nation that have been largely by-passed by the broad-based process of social and

economic progress. These groups are often disadvantaged by their remote locations and are particularly vulnerable to the uncertainties that are associated with the harsh environments in which they live."⁶ Girls did not participate nearly as much as the boys in early days of Bhutan's modern education system. It was partly because of the family's reluctance to send their daughters

away to schools, which were located far away from the villages. Students had to walk for hours through forests and the rugged terrain to reach schools.

This partly explains the dismally small percentage of women employed in the public sector. Women constitute only 16% of the employment in the public sector. During the Eighth Plan, girls' enrolment at Primary and secondary school stood at 43.2% and women's enrolment at the tertiary level was 22.6%. While the national literacy rate is 54%, the female literacy rate is estimated at little over 10%.¹

Domestic violence against women is increasingly being recognized as a problem. The prime minister made a mention of it in his report to the recent National assembly session. As in most societies, there exists a culture of silence among women and their families in Bhutan, when it involves rape and domestic violence against women. Many Bhutanese women concede that marital violence occurs because of jealousy and the influence of alcohol².

Despite the national policy to integrate women in the mainstream political life of the country, women's representation is very low. In all the dzongkhags, male dominates the GYT¹ and the DYT².

DYT membership in some randomly

Dzongkhag	Male	Female
Tsirang	50	0
Lhuntshi	26	0
Trashig Yangtshi	24	0

In 2001, only 14 of the 99 chimis, people's representatives were women. Only 1 of the 6 Royal Advisory Councilors is a woman. No women have yet been promoted to grade 1 of the civil service. In grade 2 there is only 1 woman out of 27 men and in grade 3 there are 3 women out of 63 men.¹

Low literacy and education among women explains the low representation of women in political forums. Government has made efforts to address this problem. The non-formal education is one such effort.

The non-formal education (NFE) first introduced by the National Women's Association of Bhutan in 1981 is gaining popularity amongst women. Aimed at enhancing the literary skills, the NFE, now taken over by the Education division has 90 centers all over the country. Women make up 70% of its learners.



Entering Modernization

Along with other health issues, indicators for women's health have shown remarkable improvements particularly during the last 15 years. From 1984 to 2000, the infant mortality rate and the maternal mortality rate fell from 102.8 to 60.5 per 1,000 live births and from 7.7 to 2.5 per 1000 live births respectively. The under-5 mortality rate fell from 162 to 84 per 1,000 live births.¹ An immediate goal is to reduce maternal mortality to less than 200 per 100,000 live births.

Sex education and Sexual awareness is a primary constraint. "Unfortunately, the majority of Bhutanese women experience motherhood very early in life, often in their teens... There is an obvious lack of information on sexuality.... There is virtually no access or opportunity for the out of school population to learn about reproductive health until a female becomes pregnant and attends the Antenatal clinic."² In rural Bhutan women perform multiple roles and equally participate in almost every socio economic and cultural activity of the community. However, their involvement has been largely determined by their physical weakness, sexual vulnerability and social insecurities, which has greatly reduced their mobility and opportunities.



The Nangi Aums

"Although the vast majority of our population have benefited in very tangible ways from the process of social and economic development, the benefits have not been shared equally."¹

The Government recognizes that while there is no gender discrimination, there nevertheless exists "gender gap" in development caused mainly due to the broad based development process.

Bhutan's development policy therefore states that measures to promote women will be incorporated in all sectoral projects and programmes². However, the government recognizes that gender mainstreaming is difficult because of lack of understanding of what the mainstreaming commitment fully entails and a continuing tendency by some officials to view women as an isolated 'sector'.³

¹ A history of Bhutan, land of the Peaceful Dragon.

² RGOB, Central Statistical Organization, 2002

³ Kinga. Sonam. The Status of Women in Traditional and Modern Bhutan, Prepared for Centre for Bhutan Studies, 1999 (hereafter Kinga, 1999)

⁴ CEDAW in Bhutan.

⁵ Kinga Sonam, The Status of Women in Bhutan, Center for Bhutan Studies, (unpublished source)

⁶ Bhutan Vision 2020

¹ 7th five year plan

² RGoB, et al., 2001

³ Gewog Yargay Tshogchung

⁴ Dzongkhag Yargay Tshogchung

⁵ Royal Civil Service Commission.

¹ RGoB, Ministry of Health, 2002

² National Medical Standard for Contraceptive Services, 1999.

³ Bhutan Vision 2020

⁴ RgoB, DoP, 2002

⁵ CEDAW in Bhutan

Highlights of campus Events

Talk on Election



Attendee

Mendiratta, consultant to the Indian Election Commission on 29th August 2005.

Mr. Surinder who is on a visit to the country to advise on the draft election law was delivering a talk titled 'An Over View of Election' at the Royal Institute of Management. He highlighted the provisions of the draft constitutions and its electoral implication. He pointed out that free and fair election was the backbone for true democracy.

The talk organized by the Office of the Legal Affairs was attended by the Government officials, UNDP representatives, faculty and trainees of the

"With a benign leadership such as your king, I don't think you will need democracy like the one most countries practice" said Mr. Surinder Kumar

Facelift for the RIM Elementary services



Informed for professionalism

Ram Bahadur and Penjore, both ex drimpons of the Royal Bhutan Army are familiar faces in the institute campus. Vigilantly, they stroll the campus day and night on the look out for any stalkers. They would direct visitors and keep away unwanted strangers from the institute.

Today they conduct their duty in the new uniform and with an iron embedded baton. Bahadur and Penjore are among the group of elementary service personnel who ensure that the Institute's security and basic amenities are functioning well.

The new sets of uniforms and paraphernalia are provided as a strategy to profesionalize security and elementary services.



With the Director

"In the new uniform, I feel once again like in the army. However I cannot salute at the moment without the RIM batch on the cap. Once I receive the batch, I am eager to salute once again to officials" said Ram Bahadur with soldierly confidence.

Course on Basic Accounts & Inventory Management



In Session

About 30 participants from the private sector are undergoing Basic Accountancy and Inventory management course at the Royal Institute of Management. The course, which began on 29th August 2005, is organized by the Department of human Resources of the Ministry of Labor and Human Resources.

During the 10 - day course the participants would be trained to keep books of accounts and undertake inventory management. According to Damber, a resource person from the RIM, the training is designed to suit the needs of the private sector of Bhutan. "The course would enable participants to take up basic accountancy and inventory management functions at the organizations" he said.

The participants would also learn Tally, an accountancy computer soft ware, which is popularly used by most small and medium private businesses.

The course is the first of the two training programmes planned to be delivered to the private sector candidates. The second training Programme is scheduled for 19th September 2005.

The Ministry of Labor and Human Resources also plans to organize course on Customer Care for the private sector organizations sometime in

I don't work; I am just a housewife

By Sonam Chuki, RIM



Sonam Chuki, Lecturer

Aum Changlom lives in Thimphu. Her husband is recently transferred from a Geog to the capital. Changlom is from a village in rural Bhutan. She is a high school drop out; actually received formal education till class eight. While in school, she met the newly posted local rural extension worker. Their friendship soon blossomed into a love affair. Changlom eloped with the man at the age of eighteen. Soon she had one child after another and got busy with child bearing and rearing. At present, Changlom is a mother of six children, four boys and two girls. Her family keeps her busy throughout the day.

Every day she starts her routine around 5:30 and 6:00AM. After a quick wash up, she sweeps their two-bed room flat, waters her collection of flowers and plants, cooks breakfast, wakes her four school going children up and gets them ready for the school. In addition, she is a religious person and never misses offering the daily water and incense at the small family altar. During the auspicious days like the Guru and Khandum days, she makes it a point to make Tshog and butter lamp offerings. She also devotes at least half an hour to say special prayer for the family's well being. Then she has to serve breakfast to her husband and help him wear his Gho. She still has a two and half year old baby girl and a four-year-old son to attend to. After doing the dishes, she gives bath to the baby and feeds both the children.

They live in a neighborhood where there is a frequent water problem. So, Changlom has to fetch water from a common water tap, which is located about 15 minutes walk from her flat. This demands time and energy. In the evenings when her four older children return from school, she does not have to worry about this. However, in the afternoons and during the children's exams she creates time for this. But Changlom is a hardworking woman. To supplement the family's income, she brews ara and sells doma through the neighbor's grocery shop. Sometimes, she even

weaves shopping baskets of various sizes for sell.

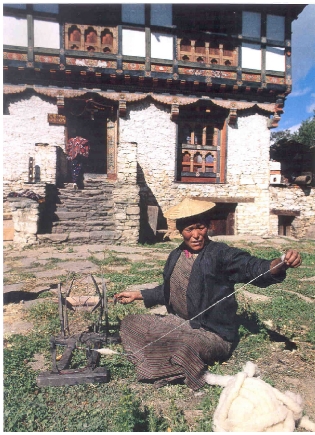
Occasionally, she receives guests and entertains them. She prepares evening tea and supper. When the other members of the family are watching TV

know that she does not work. Her husband works but she is just a housewife. and sleeping, Changlom and her eldest child do the dishes and clean up.



Breaking the Stereotype

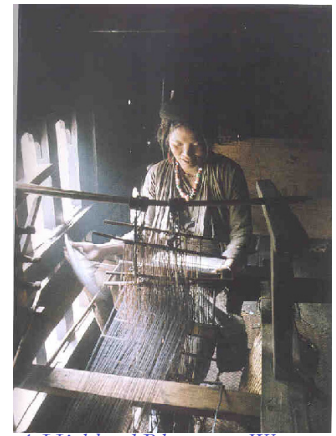
in our minds. Generally speaking, men are often viewed as the breadwinners and women as dependents. Women's roles are perceived as child bearers, mothers and housekeepers. Such construction of women's roles derives from the dominant understandings of gender roles prescribed by the society. According to literature, gender refers to the perceptions of appropriate behaviour, appearance and attitude for women and men that arise from social and cultural expectations. The socialization process of gender is influenced by social norms, values, traditional practices, culture, religious and moral of the society. Every culture has its ways of valuing girls and boys and assigning them different roles, responses and attitudes. All the social and cultural attributes that is given for girls and boys from birth onwards is "gendering". In addition, parents, teachers, friends and other members of the society play a vital role to the socialization process of gender. In the traditional Bhutanese context, the perception of women as wives, mothers, homemakers, caregivers and nurturers exists. This role is not accounted for as "work". Changlom is busy throughout the day, yet she knows that she does not work. Her informal activities such as brewing ara, weaving basket and making doma to earn extra income is not counted as work. This implies that men's work is formally assessed and counted in the national statistic and accounting system. But women's informal work is not recognized as work. Instead, women like



Spinning the Stereotype

household tasks and making money for the family outside the formal economic sector. Such work is nameless in nature as it is not included in the national census. Changlom admits that her husband works. This understanding is dominant in many developing societies. Like Changlom's husband, men have more visible and recognized roles than women. This is because men are paid for their productive work and women are not. Men do not usually perform domestic or household chores. Even if they have community management roles, these tend to involve political organizations and leadership. On the contrary, women in most societies have three roles. They engage in production of goods for consumption or income through work in or outside the home. They involve in reproductive role in the form of domestic and household activities associated with rearing and sustaining children and family. Furthermore, women participate in community management activities such as tasks and responsibilities carried out for the benefit of the community. Hence, women have to strike a balance to the demands of these three different roles. However, the triple roles that they perform do not normally earn them an income. Women are often defined exclusively in terms of their reproductive roles, which largely concern activities related with their reproductive functions. Changlom's daily activities suggest she is seen as a wife and a mother. In addition, women's reproductive roles coupled with their community management roles are perceived as natural. Since these roles do not earn income, they are not recognized and valued as economically productive. Thus, women's contribution to national socio economic development is often invisible and not quantified. But in reality, like Changlom in many less industrialized societies women carry out income generating activities through small flower and vegetable gardening and handicraft making. According to Gender Pilot Study Report, kitchen garden and livestock activities are dominant

amongst the rural Bhutanese women. Moreover, the study has found out that the rural women not only involve in main economic activities but also contribute as chief workers for the supplementary activities. Though the men in urban areas are



A Highland Bhutanese Woman

primary income earners, women make additional income for the family (Planning Commission et al. 2001: 10).

Gender roles and responsibilities vary among cultures and can change over time. In India for instance, unskilled labor is considered as "women's work". While in Africa, it is regarded as "men's work". And in West European countries and United States, men's contribution to domestic chores is becoming increasingly significant and visible. Here in Bhutan there is no visible trend of men making contribution to the house hold activities. Our tradition and culture have attributed domestic activities as the domain of womenfolk. Nevertheless, under the process of modern development, this tradition is changing. The socio cultural change is slow but it has a certain degree of impact on the prevailing mindset in our country.

Reference:

Planning Commission and Central Statistical Office, Royal Government of Bhutan, and UNDP, UNICEF, WFP; Bhutan Country Office (2001) *Gender Pilot Study Report*

What is CEDAW?

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is the international agreement adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly. It consists of a preamble and 30 articles, defining what constitutes discrimination against women and setting up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. As such, CEDAW is often described as an international bill of rights for women.

By accepting the Convention, countries commit themselves to undertake a series of measures to end discrimination against women in all forms, including:

- o to incorporate the principle of equality of men and women in their legal system, abolish all discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate ones prohibiting discrimination against women;
- o to establish tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women against discrimination; and
- o to ensure elimination of all acts of discrimination against women by persons, organizations or enterprises.

Countries that have ratified or acceded to the Convention are legally bound to put its provisions into practice. They are also committed to submit national reports on measures they have taken to comply with their treaty obligations.

What is discrimination against women? What is gender equality?

The Convention defines discrimination against women as “...any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.”

The Convention provides the basis for realizing equality between women and men. Deepening the meaning of “equality”, the UN Millennium Project Task Force on Gender Equality suggests three fundamental domains of gender equality: equality in human capabilities; equality in opportunities; and, equality in agency¹. The domain of equality in human capabilities refers to acquiring basic human abilities as measured through education, health, and nutrition. The domain of equality in opportunities refers to what is additionally needed to exercise the equal human capabilities (eg, access to job opportunities, land, capital and so on). The domain of equality in agency refers to a person’s ability to formulate strategic choices and make decisions that affect important life outcomes.

(Source: CEDAW, Caren Grown, Geeta Rao Gupta, and Zahia Khan, Background Paper of the Millennium Project Task Force on Gender Equality, April 2003. See also United Nations Human Development Report, 1995.)

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