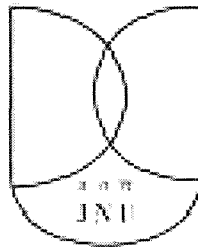


PRINT MEDIA IN BHUTAN: CHANGING TRENDS, 2006-2010

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for award of the degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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Date: 25 July 2011

DECLARATION

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*This Dissertation is dedicated to My Parents and
Santosh and Babi*

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Sandeep Kumar
Sandeep Kumar 25/07/2011

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---------------|--|
| ABU | Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Union |
| AFPA | Association of Press Freedom Activists |
| AIBD | Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development |
| AIPA | Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act |
| BBS | Bhutan Broadcasting Service |
| BCMD | Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy |
| BICMA | Bhutan Information and Communication and Media Authority |
| BTN | Bhutan Ngultrum |
| CDG | Constituency Development Grants |
| CTEM | Cleaner Technology and Environmental Management |
| DANIDA | Danish International Development Agency |
| DWRTC | Deutsche Welle Radio Training Centre |
| DWTTC | Deutsche Welle TV Training Center |
| ECB | Election Commission of Bhutan |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| GNH | Gross National Happiness |
| HRD | Human Resources Development |
| IANS | Indo-Asian News Service |
| ICM | Information Communication and Media |
| ICT | Information and Communication Technology |
| IFJ | International Federation of Journalists |
| JICA | Japan International Cooperation Agency |
| MIS | Media Impact Study |
| MOIC | Ministry of Information and Communication |

| | |
|---------------|--|
| MP | Member of Parliament |
| NA | National Assembly |
| NC | National Council |
| NYAB | National Youth Association of Bhutan |
| PSB | Public Service Broadcasting |
| RGOB | Royal Government of Bhutan |
| RTI | Right to Information |
| SAARC | South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation |
| SAFMA | South Asian Free Media Association |
| TWMN | Third World Media Network |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and cultural organisation |
| WIPO | World Intellectual Properties Organisation |
| WTO | World Trade Organisation |

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transport is by air which is limited either to helicopter or special planes¹. Bhutan geo-strategic location also influences its political and economic relation with other countries. Another feature of this country is its sparse population. The topography of Bhutan restricts its inhabitants from being concentrated in any region, which has resulted in no single place having a population of more than 10,000 or 15,000 people. Bhutan is thus, not isolated from the rest of the world but from within.

Beside the Indo-Mongoloids and the Nagloes, Bhutan is also home to people of Tibetan origin. They came to Bhutan during the 8th Century AD and, more recently, in 1959. They brought the Tibetan culture and Buddhism to Bhutan, and are located in the northern Bhutan. There are also persons of Nepali origin who have settled in the southern region of Bhutan. Most of them are Hindus. They arrived in late 19th century and early 20th century. They were one's dominant ethnic group in southern Bhutan².

Dzongkha is the official language of Bhutan which is written in the classical Ucan Tibetan script. It is taught in all the school, while English serve as a medium of instruction in various secular schools as well as being used in official communication. Earlier Nepali also used to be taught in the school of the southern Bhutan while classical Dzongkha was taught in monastery schools. In addition to this there are some other languages like Hindi and Tibetan most of the settlement use to which are spoken by various settlements. In 1990s through the policy of one nation one people Dzongkha was became precondition for being a citizenship of Bhutan³.

Evolution of Media in Bhutan

Media is not just journalism and entertainment, media is like a mirror which reflects society and culture. Media express values and norms of society. Media perform public functions. Media cultivate the public mind. Therefore, media help society to understand change and in the process, define and promote values that contribute to the well-being of society. Media in Bhutan have progressively enhanced

¹ Pradyumna, P. Karan (1967), *Bhutan: A Physical and Cultural Geography*, Univ. of Kentucky press

² Kharat, S Rajesh (2005), *Foreign Policy of Bhutan*, New Delhi, Manak Publications.

³ Ibid., p4

individual awareness by widening the scope of information transmission beyond the traditional face-to-face oral interaction to literacy-oriented communication and now to an electronic media. Media in Bhutan has seen significant growth since the mid-1980s, with the establishment of BBS (Bhutan Broadcasting Services) and the newspaper *Kuensel*, and the small information revolution that took place in the late 1990s with the introduction of television and the internet. This has happened due to rapidly changing socio-economic and political situation in Bhutan. The pro-democratic movement in Bhutan, as well as pressure from international organisations and governments compelled Bhutan to change its approach towards the role of media in Bhutan. Moreover, the global media has already criticised and highlighted the negative aspects of Bhutanese media, as it worked as a mouth piece of Bhutanese government. Hence introducing of democracy in Bhutan has mandated an open media, as a vital part of Bhutan's transition.

Media is helping to construct a new political culture in Bhutan. In terms of good governance, the media is helping a democratic culture to evolve by providing the public space for public discourse. The traditional and new media have become indispensable for modern living and they continue to influence the way of living, social values and norms, thinking and behaviour. The use of mobile phones has risen dramatically since it was introduced in 2003, and has now superseded fixed landlines. More than one third country's population now uses the mobile phone which is becoming a multipurpose tool. Other technologies are coming in and with them, a variety of new media forms such as international direct dialling, computer games, CD ROMs, new interactive radio, TV and cable channels, online newspapers, and interactive websites⁴. The media is now a way of life for most of the Bhutanese. Although, access to media is limited for the common man and the interests vary between the rural and urban population, the rich and poor, the old and young. The Media Impact Study (Government of Bhutan Survey 2008) explains that television, particularly international channels, had the strongest impact on urban society, especially on the youth population. Radio has been the main influence on the rural population and the print media reached the literate and policy makers.

⁴Royal Government of Bhutan (2008), *Media Impact Study 2008*, Ministry of Information and Communication, Thimpu, p1

Mass media in Bhutan until 2006 was comprised of *Kuensel*⁵, the national newspaper; BBS (Bhutan Broadcasting Service), the public service radio; TV; Internet; and cinema. This is not surprising as the country come close to the modernization process only four decades ago.

When the modern economic development started in 1961, priority for development was on creation of basic physical infrastructure, such as roads and power stations, and social infrastructure, such as schools and hospitals⁶. In such a situation, with decision making concentrated in the capital, it was appropriate and adequate to have only the *Kuensel*, as a voice of government. In fact, *Kuensel* did not start as a newspaper. It was more a development newsletter carrying short write-ups on important decisions and events revolving around the capital Thimphu.

Similarly, radio was first broadcast in 1973 as a weekly service for the Thimphu area. It was initiated by an amateur radio operator and a group of volunteers of National Youth Association of Bhutan (NYAB). In fact the station was known as Radio NYAB⁷. With the bureaucracy getting bigger and development activities increasing year-by year, there was a need for wider coverage.

Radio NYAB became a full-fledged public service in 1979 after the station was brought under the erstwhile Department of Information & Broadcasting. The Royal Government of Bhutan realising the potential of radio to disseminate information brought Radio NYAB under the wings of the Ministry of Communications. Further support from the government and external aid agencies led to the establishment of the Bhutan Broadcasting Service in June 1986⁸.

Bhutan launched the broadcast television on June 2, 1999 and liberalised the media with foreign television stations beaming into the country from space. The day before, Bhutan was connected to the worldwide web (www) and cyberspace.

⁵ *Kuensel* newspaper was started in 1967 as an official bulletin of the Royal Government. It later became a full fledged newspaper in June 1986. In 1992, it became independent of the government by the Royal Decree of 1992.

⁶ Karma Ura (2004), "The Bhutanese development story", *Kuensel*, 26 February 2004.

⁷ Dorji, Wangchuk (2007), "Media in the New Political Order", *Journal of Bhutanese Studies*, p277

⁸ Ibid, p275

Finally in January 2005, the first two independent newspapers were licensed under private ownership, marking a new era in the Bhutanese media. While this was a surprise for many who never believed that Bhutan would accept the Western notion of a free press. For Bhutanese society and media persons this development was seen as a natural progression of the media in the country. The seed for an independent press, in fact, was sown in 1992 when, by a Royal Decree, the two media organisations, BBS and *Kuensel*, were delinked from the government apparatus.

The decree clearly specified the mandate and professional role of the Bhutanese media, aside from implying fresh directions and responsibility. It is often referred to as the turning point in the history of media development in Bhutan. So the growth of media has been in consonance with the socio-economic development of the country. It reflected the changes taking place in the social, political, and economic evolution of the country.

Growth and Development of Media

For centuries people in Bhutan relied on the tradition of oral transmission of information, which is still strong in rural areas. The written form of correspondence was also said to have been dwelling for long. However, then the literacy rate in the country was insignificant and the impact of written form of media was said to be not so effective. With the socio-economic development and the geo-political changing scenario, the government has given an utmost priority to the media and its development. The Constitution of Bhutan guarantees freedom of speech, opinion, and expression and the right to information to the people. In response to the broad Constitutional changes the Government has adopted the Bhutan Information, Communications and Media Act 2006 (Bhutan ICM Act 2006), drafted media regulations and a code of ethics. Codes for advertising, content for the broadcast and print media are being finalised⁹. While the Ministry of Information and Communications (MOIC) is responsible for policy and overall media development,

⁹ For details see, Report which is available on the website of “Ministry of Information and Communication”/Bhutan.

BICMA (Bhutan Information, Communications and Media Authority) was established to enforce media regulations.

With the introduction of some legislation in support of the media, the technological advancement and the socio-economic development have altogether pulled in the media with new roles and responsibilities for the society. Further, the policy emphasis on private sector development paved the way for the development of enterprises and business firms. This caused enormous pressure on the media to perform its function through the activities of advertisement, notification, entertainment, etc. Thus, in recent years, the media has gained momentum in the Kingdom. Today, we see the following, (The component of media in Bhutan are *Audio*:- BBS Radio, Kuzoo Radio, Radio Valley, International Radio. *Video*:- BBS TV, Domestic cable stations, Foreign TV, Mobile phone, Internet, Cinemas. *Print*:- *Kuensel*, Bhutan observer, Bhutan times, etc) which are some of the most important and prominent forms of media in the country.

This table shows the growth in the field of information and communication between 2003 and 2008.

Table 1.1: Information and communication indicators, Media Impact Study 2008, Bhutan

| Media | 2003 Nos. | 2008 Nos. | Source/remarks |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|--|
| Radio sets | 37,000 | 88,000 | BBS 2006 audience survey |
| Televisions | 35,000 | 47,125 | NSB,BLSS 2007 |
| Cable TV operators | 33 | 52 | MoIC |
| Cable subscribers | 15,000 estimate | 30,000 | MoIC |
| DTH TV | - | About 2,000 | Estimate from cable operator's association |
| Internet | | | |
| Computers nationwide | About 8,000-10,000 | 13,500 | 2003-DTH/BHUTAN 2008- Kezang and whalley |
| Internet subscribers | 1,900 with an estimated 5000 users | 10,000 users | 2003-Druknet figures 2008-Kezang and whalley |
| Leased lines | 26 | 168 | Estimates |
| Internet cafes | 12 | 53 | Trade dept. Data |

| | | | |
|--|---------------|--|---|
| IT companies | 16 | 20 | MoIC |
| IT training institutes | 18 | 18 | MoIC |
| Newspaper/ Publications | | | |
| Contemporary books and publications by Bhutanese | 207 | 1,181 | 2008- centre for Bhutanese studies (199-2008) |
| Film and Music | | | |
| Cinemas | 8 | 8+2 video halls | Ministries of economic affairs |
| No. of Bhutanese films produce to date | - | 116 | MPA= Motion picture association |
| Audio – Visual production Companies | 42 | 82 Registered members with MPA , 96 Registered companies with the MoEA | MPA and Ministries of economic affairs |
| Music recording companies | - | 14 registered members | MPA |
| Telephones | | | |
| Mobile users | - | 250,000 | Bhutan Telecom and Tashi cell |
| Telephone users | 21,600 | 28,000 | Bhutan Telecom |
| Tele – density | 2.9% | 42% | Bhutan Telecom |
| General data | | | |
| PCO/STD phone booths | | 727 | Trade dept, data |
| Video game parlour | Not available | 65 | Trade dept. Data |
| Literacy rate | 54% | 56% | NSB, BLSS 2007 |
| Power coverage | 35% | 72% | NSB,BLSS 2007 |
| Population | | 630,000 | NSB,BLSS 2007 |

MoIC- Ministry of Information and Communications

DIT- Department of Information Technology

NSB- National Statistic Bureau

BLS- Bhutan Living Standard Survey

Sources: - media impact study 2008

It clearly shows that how information technology and media are growing in Bhutan. Consumption of media and information technology has rather increased. Today Society has been more demanding in nature.

Access to Media

As far as access to media is concern there is a big gap between rural and urban population. The population is scattered across small villages, and due to the lack of proper roadways, it is difficult to access all region of Bhutan. Socio-economic gap between urban and rural population is so diverse, that poor section of society can't afford all the media access. Due to the difference in distribution and consumption, the impact of media differs between rural and urban areas. Due to the lack of transportation, in some parts of Bhutan, newspapers reach to its destination by one or two days late. Language barrier is also an important factor access to media. Since villagers are mostly illiterate, radio is the only medium through which they are being informed, both about the nation and the world at large. Those who are somehow literate and living in village, likes to read only Dzongkha newspaper, so that English newspaper is prominent in urban population only. In particular, through radio they learn about government policies and development activities taking place around the country. However, despite the availability of many stations via radio, most Bhutanese only listen to BBS radio due to the language barrier. Therefore, the variety of news, programmes and entertainment are limited and hence the impact of media is also limited in the rural areas. Had there been television instead of radio in the rural area, the impact would have been very different, because of its visual powers.

The seminar, Parliament and Media in a Democracy - March 2009, conducted a short poll on 27 participant's views on news media.

What is your primary source of news?

- TV 23%
- Newspaper 22%
- Internet 18.41%
- Radio 11.1%
- Magazine 7.1
- Friends and family 5%
- Cell phone 5%

- Word of mouth 2.1%
- Other 2.1%
- Do not follow news 0

According to this poll it becomes clear that T.V is major source of news for educated ones lives in urban area.

How important do you feel it is that you keep up with the news everyday?

- Very important 21.8%
- Important 3.1%
- Somewhat important
- Not crucial 0

Is it your opinion that most news outlets exhibit bias?

- Not sure 40.9%.
- Yes 32%
- No 18%
- I do not understand 9%

Do the media present too much trivial news?

- Sometimes 47.8%
- Just the right amount 21.8%
- Yes 21.7%
- No 8.7%
- I don't know 0%

Do the media present too much bad news?

- Sometimes 54.1%
- Yes 16.6%
- No 12.5%
- Just the right amount 12.5%
- I don't know 4.1%

Electronic media particularly television is largely influenced by the global culture and tradition in Bhutan. For a country like Bhutan, there was no concept of electronic

media a decade ago, and society was limited to his own culture and traditions, it is hard enough for them to consume global culture.

Do the media present enough news on the parliament?

- Just the right amount 33.3%
- Yes 20.8%
- No 20.8%
- Sometimes 20.8%
- I don't know 4.1%

Do the Bhutanese media have too much freedom or too little freedom?

- Just enough freedom 50%
- I don't know 16.7%
- Too much freedom 12.5%
- Too little freedom 12.5%
- Alternates 8.3%

A Free and Responsible Press in Bhutan

The Government, and sections of Bhutanese society, accuse the media of lacking a sense of responsibility that should come with freedom. While many Bhutanese recognise that the media enjoys freedom, many express grievance for lack of depth in political reporting. Several key issues facing the polity, including a Supreme Court ruling holding certain taxation measures to be unconstitutional, are not adequately discussed or covered by the local media.

The Government however accepts the media as the fourth branch of governance. At a Media Dialogue hosted by the Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy (BCMD) in December 2010 and then previously in his "State of the Nation" report – the Prime Minister acknowledged the need for media to be independent. He said it was the

state's obligation to ensure that the media functions independently, as with the judiciary and the executive¹⁰.

Bhutan's media is recognised as a force in the country's transformation, and some introspection is taking place about the media and within the media. At the Media Dialogue, several members of the press said they had unconsciously taken on the role of the opposition, in a country where there are only two opposition members in the 47-member National Assembly.

The challenges and role of public service broadcasting (PSB) were discussed in a seminar in November 2010. Media representatives and people from a cross section of society came together to listen to international specialists speak on the importance of PSB in democracies. The seminar concluded with recommendations on how to ensure that Bhutan's broadcast industry addresses the needs of citizens even as the pressures of entertainment media continue to grow.

Over All Influence of Media on Bhutanese Society

The media, in general, has been playing a significant role in shaping Bhutanese society today. Media is the term closely associated with the fourth estate (which includes both print and visual media), and it has not only become an important factor in democracy, but is playing a major role in educating the public. Media has removed the gap between public and government. Today media is playing important role in policy making. The electronic media has really made the world a global village. Just by pressing a button, one gets to know the happenings in virtually any part of the world. The satellite television has brought into their lives, the kind of things that they could not even imagine a few decades ago. There are also programmes on television, where experts from different fields are invited to give talks, or to participate in discussions so that it helps them in choosing their careers, or

¹⁰ Muralidharan, Sukumar (2010-2011), "Free speech in peril. Press freedom in south Asia", *IFJ Press Freedom Report*, p17

finding solutions to their problems. There are also career counselling sessions on television, and students are immensely benefited by such programmes.

The Indian Print and electronic media have largely influenced the Bhutanese media and their society. Indian English-language publications like Times of India, Telegraph, Economic Times, Hindustan Times, and magazine like India Today, and The Outlook are dominated in Bhutanese market. Similarly the electronic media like Bollywood Movies, Radio, and News Channel and Television Serials¹¹.

At the same time it has also influenced people to accept global culture and values. This has led to the undermining of indigenous culture and practices. The excessive advertisement that is now available on television, more than on videos leads to changes in dress style and to new consumption demands, particularly among youth, which constitutes about 57% of the total population¹². This is already visible through the display of more modern consumer goods in the market. Besides, violence portrayed on television encourages violence. Scenes of nudity and sexuality implied or otherwise, undermine the sanctity of family values and society at large. The television has further enabled people to see beyond their traditional borders, peoples and culture of the world and, therefore, broaden their perceptions and ideas. On the other hand, it has encouraged adoption of western lifestyles of conspicuous consumption, erosion of native values and languages and changed their interactions with family and neighbours. It has also allowed foreign culture to penetrate and influence traditional cultural practices. Public culture is changing every day and change is giving birth to a new cultural identity.

Literature Review

Literature available on this research topic is in the form of books, research articles, government's report and document as well as the related websites. In order to

¹¹ For details see, www.afpanews.com/media_monitor/reports

¹² Royal Government of Bhutan (2008), *Bhutan, Media Impact Study 2008*, Ministry of Information and Communications, Thimphu, pp 53-54

understand the media and its role books are the major sources. Similarly research articles, government reports and survey, newspaper articles, website of international organisation and media, provides information about transition of media's role in the modern age

Many academic papers written about the media in Bhutan place the media in the perspective of a small and vulnerable society transiting into a democracy. They support freedom of speech and information as basic tenets in a democracy but emphasise preservation of the culture and caution against a liberal and unrestrained media policy.

Participants at a Media and Public Culture conference in 2006 called for mature and careful judgment in the mass media in Bhutan so that they “support rather than destroy the culture and values of the country” as Bhutan undergoes through the process of modernisation. Some, like New Zealand professor Ross Macdonald, go to the extent of calling for the ban of advertising on TV to avoid the culture of consumerism that is considered counter-productive in a country that strives to maximise GNH rather than GDP¹³.

Academics, journalists and analysts acknowledge the need for an open and independent mass media but advocate a more responsible media. Of particular concern is the impact of media on children and the young.

Many academics point out the need to find the right balance between liberalisation and media control. They point to ways in which Bhutan should take advantage of the positive elements of media public service rather than being consumed by the market driven media.

The impact of TV content on Bhutanese culture has also been debated with many writers tending to conclude that the negative impacts outweigh the positive. Dorji and

¹³ McDonald, Ross (2007), “Selling Desire and Dissatisfaction: Why Advertising should be banned from Bhutanese Television”. *Proceedings of seminar on media and public culture, Centre for Bhutan Studies, Thimpu*. pp 204-06

Pek (2007) recommend more investment in content to balance the global information invasion.

Several articles from the conference on Media and Public Culture call for clearer policies to prevent the negative impact of commercially driven media.

Ball-Rokeach, S.J and Cantor, M.G. (eds), (1986), in the book titled, *Media, Audience and Social Structure*, talk about media and their relationship with the society. Going through this book we come to know about media, types of media, nature of media, how far media is important for audience and lastly their relationship with society. This book was written in 1980s so the emerging of a new media in age of globalisation and their relationship with society is missing. Especially in the 1990s with the advent of new age of information, attitudes and behaviour of media has shifted.

Alahari, S. Prasad (1997), in the book titled, *Modernism, Alienation and Media Behaviour*, traced the way through which new modern media was developing. He talks about modern media and their behaviour towards society in which he tries to explain the impact of modernism over society. He also talk about alienation brought by new media within the society.

Sharma, Suresh chandra (1987), in the book titled, *Media, communication and development*, talk about positive aspect of media and their contribution to the development of society. He didn't tries to examine the role of media by putting them between age of modernisation and culture changes.

Balasubramanian, N and Nidup, Jigme (2006), in the article titled, "*Role of Media in the Changing Socio-Political Situations in Bhutan*", argue that a major challenge for media in Bhutan is "how to get the people out of this whirlpool of consumerism? What role will the media have in making the people at large rise from their individual selves to the spatial level of responsible citizenship? To what extent will the media in

Bhutan be circumscribed by neutrality, impartiality, security, anonymity and meritocracy?" These are the major issues requiring Bhutan's attention, according to the authors.

Dorji, Tshering (2006), in the article titled, "*Attitudes Towards Mass Media*", found that most respondents in his study spent the most time watching TV. He concluded that a majority of people considered information the most important reason for using *Kuensel*, listening to the radio and TV. The study revealed that the impact of the newspaper *Kuensel* on respondent's decision-making appears to be greater compared to BBS radio and BBS TV. And overall, the study says that *Kuensel* and BBS TV had influenced a greater number of people.

In Bhutan's atmosphere of rapid socio-political and economic change the traditional "gatekeepers" of family and community value systems are slowly losing their impact (S.S.Pek-Dorji). Today, with traditional story telling on the decline and urbanisation on the rise, the traditional role of family and community elders in sharing values and societal norms through direct communications with the younger generation is weakening¹⁴. People have less time for their children. The TV has replaced the family as the story teller and keeper of traditions in the family. This development calls for stronger family interventions and media literacy. The gatekeepers media, government and families all play vital roles in filtering the news, information and values that we hold important in Bhutanese society.

Dorji, Penjore (2006), in the article titled, "*Folktales and education: The role of Bhutanese folktales in Value transmission*", states that in Bhutan's atmosphere of rapid socio-political and economic change the traditional "gatekeepers" of family and community value systems are slowly losing their impact. Today, the traditional role of family and community elders in sharing values and societal norms through direct

¹⁴ Dorji Penjore in his article "Folktales and education: The role of Bhutanese folktales in Value transmission" states that the "Walls of rural Bhutanese houses may have once echoed and re-echoed with folktales narrations, but frequency of narrations today has become even fainter and lesser."

communications with the younger generation is weakening. People have less time for their children. The TV has replaced the family as the story-teller and keeper of traditions in the family. Bhutanese society must raise the bar to achieve quality media that is the essence of GNH.

Dorji, Thinley (2007), in the article titled, "*Cultural Maintenance and Promotion: The Print Media's Role in Providing Space for Knowledge and Discourse*", talks about the role of print media in Bhutan in providing public space for cultural knowledge and discourse. Increased exposure to global cultures and consumption of mass media has forced the growth of a modern cultural trend that challenges the survival of the material and non-material contents of Bhutanese cultural identity. External threats to indigenous Bhutanese culture must be approached intelligently and wisely. He suggests the need to reinforce the present role of the print media in disseminating knowledge on Bhutanese culture through news stories and headlines, research and non research-based articles, viewpoints. Government policy on the role of the print media must recognise the latter's role in disseminating, if not generating, cultural knowledge and promoting cultural discourse. Without the media's positive role in the cultural domain, chances of its corruption and degeneration may be high, let alone its role in evolving a positive public culture in Bhutan.

Dorji, Kinley and Siok, Sian Pek (2007), in the article titled, "*Opening the Gates in Bhutan: Media Gatekeepers and the Agenda of Change*", explores the manner in which the new media in Bhutan are changing the traditional role of the gatekeeper in transmitting values, and setting the agenda for the discussion of news and information. He examines the new group of gatekeepers who are determining the information we hear, read and see, and influencing emerging social value systems. For democracy to work, media has the role to establish a diverse and vibrant public and cultural sphere, one that is truly Bhutanese and not copied. This work presents a brief review of current global trends and studies on the role of new media and examines the implications for Bhutan.

Thakur Singh Powdyel in 'Media and the Maverick Mind' alerts media to the need for higher aspirations to reinforce the human mind and to be a "conscience keeper of the nation." Media will serve our country well if it can help raise "...the intellectual tone of the society, cultivating the public mind, purifying national taste, supplying the true principles of enthusiasm and seriousness to the ideas of the age, and facilitating the exercise of political power.

Peter Hershock presents a strong argument against the persistent mass media in Bhutan's context, and says that Bhutan's public culture and environmental policies will be better served by, limiting the overall time spent in media consumption, especially by children and youth. He warns that Bhutan's steady integration into the global economy and its commitment to increasingly democratic governance, prohibit the ability for Bhutan to limit the overall time spent on media consumption with terrible consequences and leaves little time left for "immediate and sustained appreciation of family and friends" and what he calls the "subtle presences" of life¹⁵.

Hershock recommends that policies and practices should be aimed at enhancing the sensitivities and sensibilities needed for the Bhutanese people to realise the differences between taking advantage of what global media offer and being taken advantage of them.

Kesang and Whalley point out that the expansion of mobile coverage has closed the digital divide. The authors suggest that this is one way to minimise the gap between the haves and have-nots. He supports the development of a universal service fund that would provide funds, to invest in areas of the country that are economically less attractive for investors to provide services in.

¹⁵ Hershock, Peter, (2007), "Media, Markets and Meaning: Placing Sustainable Development and Environmental Conservation and Enrichment at Risk", *Proceedings of seminar on media and public culture Centre for Bhutan Studies*, Thimpu.

Internationally, Freedom House, an organisation that monitors democracy and freedom around the world, states that Bhutan's media diversity and freedom of expression have improved somewhat but is still limited. Its latest available report (2007) on Bhutan's freedom of the press states that the Bhutan Information, Communications and Media Act 2006 is concerned primarily with technological specifics, licensing and ownership, and provides no specific protection for journalists.

Published in the *Kuensel* op-ed pages on 3rd and 5th January, 2009, Dr Nitasha Kaul, An academician from the Westminster University in London noted that the best coverage of the Bhutanese transition to democracy came from Bhutan's own media. In her analysis of Bhutan's democracy and the international media, she pointed out a typical list of things that the international media stories on Bhutan would include. These are 'isolated kingdom', Gross National Happiness, the late introduction of TV and the Internet, and the southern problem.

International media watchers generally hold the view that media are not totally independent in Bhutan. While acknowledging a growing openness, they point out that Bhutanese media are generally not free to discuss openly the issues concerning national security, the royal family and the issue of the thousands of refugees in Nepal. The European Union's election observers reported that Bhutan's media coverage of the elections was free and fair.

Rationale and Scope of the Study

The proposed study will discuss the growth and development of print media in Bhutan and the changing trends from 2006 onwards. Till the 2006 there was a single newspaper *kuensel* available to the nation mostly known as a voice of government. World still believes that there is no any such kind of media. But this trend has changed; now six newspapers including private newspaper are circulating in Bhutan.

This study will try to analyse the factor responsible for changing the trends. Earlier foreign print media were not allowed, but today media has very much influenced by global media or western media. This is happening due to gradual socio-economic development as well as Bhutan exposure to the world. Moreover accessibility to the media especially print media is still a matter of concern. This study will try to find out the difficulties in accessibility to the media. As far as influence of media on culture and society is concern it has brought western culture to the Bhutanese society. Cultural influence has taken place mostly on urban population. Moreover, due to the privatisation and commercialisation, competition among newspaper has rather increased and it shows good sign for a newly democratic country.

Rationale of this study is to enrich the understanding about new media and its development in Bhutan. In the 20th century media in Bhutan was under the control of state. Due to the socio-economic and political changes in 21st century media emerged as independent institutions. In this age of information Bhutanese media can't keep aside and it has been influenced by modernisation and globalisation. This study will focus Particularly on changing trends of media since 2006 onwards as the government of Bhutan has adopted a liberal policy towards media and allowed to introduce newspapers like Bhutan Observer and Bhutan Times , Bhutan Today, Business Bhutan, Druk Netyshuel, etc run by the private organizations and institutions. At the one hand Bhutan took utmost care to preserve its cultural identity and traditions, on the other hand it is also allowing to grow media independently. It will also look at the aspect that with the establishment of democracy where there are freedom of speech, press, and expression how Bhutan's government policy will guide Bhutanese media.

Objectives of the Study

In order to understand the pattern of growth and development of media, to analyse the impact of all media, and to facilitate the development of appropriate policies for the effective consumption of information and media services, this study will focus on following issues:

- To study in detail the growth and development of media in Bhutan.
- To study the factors which are responsible for changing trends of media in Bhutan.
- To study the factors which led to the gap in media access to the urban and rural population?
- To study the influence of Indian media on Bhutanese media and its society.
- To know how Bhutanese society responds to the media.

Hypotheses

- The media in Bhutan is emerging as one of the fourth estate.
- Socio-economic gap between urban and rural population is so diverse that it limits the access to media.

Research Methodology and Data Collection:

In the proposed research the descriptive and analytical methodology will be followed. However the proposed research will be based on secondary sources. However an attempt will be made to explore the primary sources as there is not much literature available on this subject. To know the role of media it is important to understand the relation between media and society and government. There are some conference paper are available which deals with changing nature of media in modern

age and their influence over government and society. Few government survey and reports are available which provide lots of information on media and their impact. Media Impact Study published in 2003 and 2008 are two important government surveys. There are articles published in various journals and edited volumes which deals with Bhutanese media and public culture. These articles provide comprehensive understanding about public culture of Bhutan and media's role. Some recent changes and development brought by media in society, culture and governance of Bhutan are available in news paper article. Opinion of some international organization and media about Bhutanese media is also available on website of concerned organisation. This is the way and method through which this proposed research will be approached.

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CHAPTER 2

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF PRINT MEDIA IN BHUTAN

Media development in Bhutan has been a part of the process of planned development. To understand the growth and development of media within the Bhutanese context, one has to appreciate the overall development philosophy. In 1952 King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck recognised that, if Bhutan were to survive as a nation, it had to modernise its economy and open its door to the outside world. Hence he initiated an intense political, social and economic reform starting with the institution of the National Assembly in 1953 as the parliament. In 1961, the first five-year development plan was launched with the focus on roads and social infrastructure, such as hospitals and schools¹.

In 1965, the Royal Advisory Council was instituted as a consultative body to advise the king and government and to supervise the implementation of programs and policies laid down by the national assembly.² Three years later in 1968, the Bank of Bhutan was created to regulate the economy and monetary policies. In the same year, the Royal Court of Justice was established separating the judiciary from the executive arm of the government. In 1971, Bhutan was admitted to the United Nations as an independent and sovereign nation. King, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, who succeeded to the throne in 1972, continued this process of modernisation and gave continuity to the progressive policy of the third King. Forty years of planned development have remarkably improved the living standard. While the story of a nation's modernisation process is nothing extraordinary, but the most important thing is that this country has achieved between modernisation and cultural preservation, and between economic development and environmental conservation.

Today, as the kingdom enters the age of communications, its priorities are focused to meet the needs and demands of the times. The kingdom has seen a dramatic increase

¹ Wangchuk, Dorji (2007), "Media in the New Political Order", *Journal of Bhutanese Studies*, p276

²Royal Government of Bhutan,(2004) *Statistical Yearbook of Bhutan 2003*, National Statistical Bureau, March 2004.

in the literacy rate of the population, as a result of the special attention given by the Royal Government to the education sector. As technological advancement brings the international community closer together, it has also established the infrastructure to modernize and strengthen communications and information links with the rest of the world. It is the policy of the Royal Government, therefore, to facilitate and encourage the professional growth of the Bhutanese media, which must play an important and responsible role in all areas of development. Such role is especially relevant to the national policy of decentralization, which aims to involve all sections of the Bhutanese society in the socio-economic and political development of the Kingdom.

The government made the initial investments, including the establishment of the national newspaper and broadcasting station. It laid the groundwork for electronic infrastructure, with the establishment of the telecommunication network and the distribution of power. As the 1992 *kasho* (charter) clearly indicates, it is by policy that the media was established and then privatised. The initial emphasis was placed on infrastructure development and the training of media professionals. The next step was the sustainability of the media as independent organisations. Today it is the need for legislation. With a weak resource base, the government has sought donor funding for the Bhutanese media. UNDP (United Nation Development Programme) and other UN agencies supported the national newspaper and broadcasting station. In the 1990s, DANIDA (Danish International Development Agency) was the main funding agency for the media.

His majesty, King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuk said in a seminar (Parliament and Media in Democracy-2009) that media will be vital in keeping people well informed and encouraging debate and participation. ke. Therefore I have decided that through the exercise of my prerogative of *kidu*, to strengthen media agency so that they may carry out their duties without fear or favour, in the interest of democracy³. It can, therefore, be concluded that the growth of media has been in consonance with the socio-economic development of the country. It reflected the changes taking place in the social, political, and economic evolution of the country.

³ Bhutan Center for Media and Democracy,(2010), *Annual report 2008-2009*, p1

Introduction of Print Media in Bhutan

Kuensel

Kuensel came into existence in the late 1960's as an official fortnightly news bulletin of the Royal Government of Bhutan. Its primary role was aimed at providing information to the general public about government policies, which can be termed a civic approach. Organizationally, it was under the Ministry of Development. In 1980's, its status changed from the official news bulletin to the news bulletin and in the same decade it turned from a fortnight to a weekly news bulletin⁴. In the 1990's it became a national newspaper. In 2005, *Kuensel* started appearing twice a week⁵.

As an official mouthpiece, it was not supposed to generate debate on the issues of public interest. Under the Department of Publicity it was obviously an official mouthpiece of the government. In the earlier phase, *Kuensel* did not have an editorial as a regular feature and whenever they appeared, they were limited to some significant events which were absolutely non-controversial. By the late 1980's, editorials were a regular feature of *Kuensel*. Initially, it did not provide any scope for reader's responses. In 1990's, when its status was changed to a national newspaper, editorials and reader's opinion started featuring as regular content. The *Kuensel* issue of September 10, 1972 featured an editorial titled "Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, Kingly Reformer". On September 24, 1972, the editorial of *Kuensel* covered the three resolutions in the 37th session of the national assembly. In 1980 and 1986, *Kuensel* issues did not contain any editorials⁶.

The 1990's witnessed reader's opinions, which implied an improved role of *Kuensel* in generating public debate. In an issue of *Kuensel*, (February 18, 1995), a letter by Chhoeki Wangchuk of Galing Lhundrupjhung is a testimonial of the changing role of *Kuensel* in generating public debate on relevant public issues. In this letter Chhoeki responded to the article "Galing: A village neglected" (*Kuensel* January 28, 1995) by Tenzin Rigden about the decline in the education in Galing due to faulty government

⁴ Mehta, Sanjeev, (2007), *Role of Kuensel in Fostering Democracy in Bhutan*, Proceedings of Seminar on Media and Public Culture, Centre for Bhutan Studies, Thimpu, p304

⁵ Dorji, Kinley and Siok. Sian Pek (2007), *The Bhutanese Media: In the Service of the Public in Rethinking Development*, Proceedings of the second International Conference on Gross National Happiness, Centre for Bhutan Studies, Thimpu, p275

⁶ Ibid, p278

policy. Not only did *Kuensel* point out the flaws in the government policy but also aroused a public debate.

On another occasion Tashi Wangchuk wrote on June 24, 1995: “*Kuensel* should be pleased with the way a section of the society is influenced by its editorials”⁷. This comment showed that *Kuensel*’s reporting was able to influence popular opinion. But again he pointed out that most of the letters were written by expatriates. *Kuensel*’s reported inability to initiate public discussion among Bhutanese nationals reflects the lack of a culture of public discussion.

In 1995, the range of the coverage of the editorials was very vast. What is more significant is that this editorial was written in response to the letter by a reader on this issue. It is an example of responding to the needs of the public in a participatory approach to journalism. Other editorials included relevant public issues about: crime and unreliable police statistics (Jan 28), professionalism and quality of the work of the private contractors (April 15), and tackling fronting (June 10), which highlighted the fronting Practice of Bhutanese businessmen⁸. This editorial is an indicator of the evolution of *Kuensel* into a more independent newspaper which acts as a watchdog over public institutions. From the samples of editorials and reader’s responses it is quite evident that *Kuensel* evolved from a mouthpiece of the government to a more independent newspaper which highlights the relevant public issues, fosters public discussions on these issues, and also keeps an eye on government performance⁹.

Distributed through a broad network of agents around the country, *Kuensel* reaches its readers on the day of publication. Deliveries that took weeks have been reduced to hours with the establishment of a printing house in eastern Bhutan. Today *Kuensel* has a growing electronic subscription outside Bhutan in the PDF format.

Bhutan is building a printing industry. With the thrust on private sector development, generation of employment, and an emerging boom in the media sector, printing

⁷ Ibid, pp278-279

⁸ Ibid, p279

⁹ Kinley, Dorji and Siok, Sian Pek, (2007). *The Bhutanese Media: In the Service of the Public in Rethinking Development*, Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Gross National Happiness, Center for Bhutan Studies. Thimpu. p306

carries a promise for the future. The kingdom's largest printing house, *Kuensel* Corporation Ltd., has always headed the development of the Bhutanese printing industry. And now *Kuensel* has entered a new era of quality printing. It offers the entire range of services, from pre-press to post production, using the latest technology¹⁰.

Bhutan Times

The Bhutan Times is Bhutan's first privately owned newspaper, and only the second in the country after the government owned and autonomous *Kuensel*. Its first edition, with 32 pages, hit the proverbial news stands on 30th April 2006, with a high profile interview of Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuk. The weekly paper came out on Sundays until December 2007 when the management decided to become a biweekly paper. *Bhutan Times* comes out on Wednesdays and Sundays. The private newspaper is run by a group of young reporters and editors¹¹.

Bhutan Observer

Bhutan Observer is another private limited company operating with a little more than 50 staff in editorial, commercial, administration, and management departments. It was established on 2 June, 2006, the nation's first private bilingual (Dzongkha and English) newspaper. Its Dzongkha edition has stronghold over the rural populations¹².

Bhutan Today

Bhutan Today is the country's first daily newspaper, launched on 30 October, 2008. The launch followed the historical celebrations of His Majesty the Fifth King's Coronation and the Centenary Celebrations of 100 years of monarchy. Initially starting with eight pages daily, and seven days a week, *Bhutan Today* publishes 12 twelve pages in English and other four pages in national language "Dzongkha". The newspaper has 18 editorial staff members (including reporters and editor), including three outreach correspondents in Phuentsholing, Gelephu and Trashigang¹³. This was done to provide the widest possible coverage on all issues confronting the country.

¹⁰ For details see, www.kuenselonline.com/Home

¹¹ For details see, <http://www.bhutantimes.bt/>, *Bhutan Times*

¹² For details see, <http://www.bhutanobserver.bt/>, *Bhutan Observer*

¹³ For details see, [www.bhutantoday.bt/about us](http://www.bhutantoday.bt/about-us)

Bhutan Today is not limited to just newspaper printing, circulation and generating advertisement revenue. It has now acquired considerable experience in other forms of communication, like visual (flex advertisement), audio-visual, and other forms of communication.

Bhutan Today provides, the following services, among others:

- Audio-visual unit (including a 3-D animation advertising-empowered set up)
- Flex printing of small, medium and large hoardings,
- Printing of small to huge paper posters for internal use during official programmes,
- Sound editing equipment (for music as well as jingles),
- Promotional literature writing,
- Three-way interaction between customers,
- Specialised expertise in research for promotional activities,
- Expertise in music and animation experts internationally

Business Bhutan

This weekly English newspaper entered market in October 2009 amidst speculation of survival when existing papers were suffering out of advertisement shortage and government subsidy. Editor of the paper Tashi Dorji, in his special editorial on release of first issue, mentioned that the paper will contribute to further the freedom of expression and will make impacts some of which prompted major policy changes like forcing government to withdraw plan to hike electricity tariff¹⁴.

Druk Neytshuel

Druk Neytshuel is Bhutan's first private Dzonghka weekly newspaper launched on 29 October 2010. Chungdu Tshering the chief editor, on the eve of launch he said that they have started off two months ago, with an intention to emulate government's policy of promoting and preserving the national language¹⁵.

¹⁴ For details see, www.businessbhutan.bt

¹⁵ For details see, www.apfanews.com/mediamonitor

At a time when the quality of Dzongkha is being questioned and discussed in every possible medium, it provided an opportune attempt to apprise Bhutanese of their national language. Apart from news updates, a well organised section on Driglam Namzha, religion, economy, sports, community news and environment maintained a neat presentation on fresh topics.

Sangay Tenzin, a monk in Bhutan said that Compared with the Dzongkha issues of other private papers, this paper is on a different level all together. It appears more serious than the previous ones, who, at times, give us an impression that they are functioning just so to adhere to government policy, and not out of a genuine interest.¹⁶

In 2010, the Ministry of information and communication commissioned a study on the status of the media in Bhutan which found that freedom of expression, speech and opinion has improved by considerable measure, but that there is some amount of passivity among the people and a lack of civic action on pushing boundaries of free speech¹⁷.

The Government has adopted the UNESCO framework for assessing the development of media. The study reinforced earlier findings that media agencies continue to crowd the capital city and focus on news originating from there, primarily from politicians. The views of the rural population tend to remain unrepresented and reporting on social issues throughout the country is limited, with many news media outlets saying they cannot afford to post correspondents outside the capital.

Some of the key findings of the study, first shared in 2010 while the final report remains under preparation, include the following¹⁸:

- While the media is seen as a platform for expressing views, there is an inherent tendency for people not to make views and opinions public.
- Bhutan's media is urban centric, neglecting the majority of the population that lives in remote rural communities.

¹⁶ Dema, Kesang (2010), "first private Dzongkha weekly launched", *Kuensel*, 30 July 2010

¹⁷ Muralidharan, Sukumar. (2010-2011), "Free speech in peril. Press freedom in south Asia", *IFJ Press Freedom report*, p16

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p17

- Without a legal framework for the right to information, access to information can be hindered.
- News agencies fear that financial sustainability might compromise journalistic standards and goals as the business bottom line becomes the dominant objective.
- News media do not face any censorship on content.
- A liberal licensing policy has enhanced media diversity and plurality.
- The lack of community media may result in a neglect of cross-sector diversity and communication.
- Allocation of spectrum is equitable, fair and transparent, and promotes diversity of ownership and content.
- An advertising policy and advertisement code for media is needed, but several newspapers and media agencies oppose government implementation of a draft advertisement policy.

The study resulted in a list of recommendations to the Government to guide media development, including a call to speed up ratification of a Right to Information (RTI) Act. By the end of 2010, the Government announced that the RTI Act, now being drafted and revised, will be ready before 2012¹⁹. The media have promoted RTI and the need for such legislation has been raised at every forum concerning the media, involving both the Government and civil society.

Most people understand the RTI law will give media access to information, but fewer people understand how the law will also enable citizens to access information and that it can provide greater transparency and accountability in governance processes.

Factors Responsible For Changing Trends

Media development in Bhutan reflects the changes taking place in the Bhutanese socio-political and economic systems as well as global trends. There have been several significant milestones that mark media growth.

¹⁹ Ibid, p17

Literacy

Literacy rate of Bhutan has become 54%²⁰. Bhutan's rapid development saw changing priorities, from infrastructure to literacy. As society became more educated, the information sector was a natural priority and thus a demand for the media growth²¹.

Media Legislation

Constitution of Bhutan

Bhutan adopted a constitution in July 2008 which guarantees free speech as rights for all Bhutanese citizens. Media regulation is entrusted to the Bhutan InfoComm and Media Authority (BICMA), which was created by act in 2008. BICMA has written a journalists' code of conduct which it has said, should guide media practice in Bhutan.

Article 7 Fundamental Rights

- All persons shall have the right to life, liberty and security of person and shall not be deprived of such rights except in accordance with the due process of law.
- A Bhutanese citizen shall have the right to freedom of speech, opinion and expression.
- A Bhutanese citizen shall have the right to information.
- A Bhutanese citizen shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. No person shall be compelled to belong to another faith by means of coercion or inducement²².

²⁰ Royal Government of Bhutan (2005), *Bhutan National Human Development, the challenge of youth employment*, Report, p 40

²¹ Siok, Sian Pek., Royal Government of Bhutan (2003), *Bhutan, Media Impact Study 2003*, Ministry of Information and Communications, Thimphu, p15

²² For details see , [www.bhutanportal.com/constitution /Pdf](http://www.bhutanportal.com/constitution/Pdf)

Copyright Act 2000

With Bhutan joining WIPO/WTO and having passed the Copyright Act, copyright has become an issue of concern. This Act protects literary and artistic works, reproduction, broadcasting and other communication and information services. It also covers the rights of author and performers, producers of sound recording, and broadcasting organisations²³.

The Copyright Act is not well known in the media industry but has already had some impact, for example, by protecting some artists from losing their songs to businessmen. One private sector case was diverted from court while BBS settled a historic case against a cable operator out of court. A film producer has taken *Kuensel* to court over a film review. The broadcasting of songs, dramas and the screening of films will become issues needing attention.

Legal Deposit Act

Under this Act, all Bhutanese publishers/producers are required to deposit their publication/production of any material at the National Library and Archives within three months of the publication/ production. Materials published include all materials produced by government, government-owned or related sectors. It also includes private organisations and companies, non-government organisations and individuals who may produce materials for sale and free distribution. Printed materials include books, newspapers, magazines, serials, government publication, maps, charts, tables, drawings, graphic arts, photographs, catalogues and posters produced by printing, lithography, photography, xylograph, duplication or any other similar processes.

²³ For details see, www.bhutanportal.com/ministryof information and communication/ Bhutan/reports

Bhutan Information, Communication and Media Act 2006

Information, Communications and Media Act has been enacted by the 85th Session of the National Assembly on 5th of July 2006 corresponding to the 9th Day of the 5th Month of the Bhutanese Fire Male Dog Year²⁴. This act provides several positive developments in the field of information and communication. The main motives of this media act are:

- To implement new information and communications Technology (ICT) and media policy, particularly to emphasize the Government's priority to information, communications and media industry.
- To facilitate privatization and competition in the establishment of ICT and media facilities and services; to encourage and facilitate investment in ICT and media industry.
- To give new statutory authority to the Ministry of Information and Communications over several new activities in the ICT and media industry; to make the existing regulatory body more capable and independent regulating all aspects of ICT and media industry.
- To facilitate fair competition among all players, both in the public and private sectors; and to ensure effective use of national ICT and media infrastructure and resources; and
- To encourage and facilitate an increased use of ICT for new e-services and to effectively regulate the activities related to cyberspace and media operations, including their unwanted contents²⁵.

²⁴ For details see, www.bhutanportal.com/ministryofinformationandcommunication/Bhutan/reports

²⁵ For details see, www.bicma.govt.bt/

Bhutan Information Communication and Media Authority Act 2006

Bhutan information communication and media authority act was established to enforce media regulation. Media authority issued some rules regarding establishment and administration of media development fund²⁶. The scope of fund is to support the development and promotion of media service within the Bhutan including following:-

- Promote good local content for the media industry in Bhutan.
- Promote traditional media to bridge the knowledge divide and to facilitate the flow of cultural content, particularly in rural areas.
- Promote and develop media towards building a vibrant information society²⁷.
- Support media professional to establish partnership and network with the media in other country especially in the field of HRD (Human resources development).

Objective of the Media Development Fund

The principle objective of media development fund is to strengthen the democracy by supporting the development of a free, independent and professional media in Bhutan by providing financial support to:-

- Broadcaster, print media and content providers for media related projects.
- Facilitate improvement of the quality of the media services.
- Bhutan journalist, media organisation for the development of the media professional and,
- Promote access to information and media by all Bhutanese through supporting any proposal that directly support the development of Bhutanese media.

²⁶ For details see, [www.bhutanportal.com/ministryof information and communication/ Bhutan/reports](http://www.bhutanportal.com/ministryofinformationandcommunication/Bhutan/reports)

²⁷ For details see, Media act 2006 and media authority act 2006, both are available in the Pdf format on the website of ministry of information and communication Bhutan.

Code of Ethics for Journalist

Bhutan Information Communication and Media Authority establish this Code of Ethics for Journalists in accordance with Section 26 (d), Chapter 3 of the Bhutan Information, Communications and Media Act 2006²⁸. It Uphold the Universal rights of citizens to information, freedom of speech and expression, and independence of the media. It also promotes highest professional standards of journalism, public understanding and confidence in the Bhutanese media. Similarly it enhances responsibilities of the media and the journalists. The Journalists in Bhutan, as elsewhere, have a duty to maintain the highest professional and ethical standards. As a result it enables to provide independent and accurate news and information with integrity. It makes accountable for their actions, neutral in their position and keeping the national interest foremost in their minds at all times.

Bhutan Media Foundation 2010

Bhutan media foundation established through royal *kasho* (charter February 2010) Coinciding with His Majesty s 30th birthday anniversary, His Majesty the King issued a royal *kasho* (charter) formally establishing the Bhutan media foundation²⁹. The media foundation is being established to support the development of mass media, so that it can carry out its roles and responsibilities in the interest of democracy.

According to a press release, the foundation is expected to support the media in enhancing skills through scholarships, internships and training, strengthening media executive management and leadership skills. The foundation will support the sustainability and growth of newspapers and broadcast stations, journalists associations and press clubs. It will also invest in the future readership of the print media by striving to provide subscription grants of all newspapers to the lower, middle and higher secondary schools and colleges in the country. Additionally, it will also support the promotion of national language in the media and civic education

²⁸ For details see, www.bicma.govt.bt/paper/jcc.pdf, code of ethics for journalist, Bhutan InfoComm and Media Authority Royal Government of Bhutan Thimphu.

²⁹ Wangchuk, Rinzin (2010), "Bhutan media foundation established through royal *kasho*". *Kuensel*, 21 February 2010

programmes in the media. His Majesty, in the royal charter assured his support for the development of the media industry in the country. The foundation is donated with a seed grant of Nu 15 mn from His Majesty the King. Representatives of all media organizations agreed that the first meeting of all registered media agencies should take place promptly³⁰. This will be done to finalise the organisational structure, regulations, and codes of conduct of the foundation.

Media Associations and Organisations

The Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy (BCMD) was established in the summer of 2008 as an autonomous non-profit organization with a start-up grant from the Bhutan Foundation. With the vision of an informed citizenry and a vibrant democracy, BCMD pursued three ambitious goals: Strengthening Media Literacy; Creating Public Discourse; and Thinking Democratic. BCMD has sown the seeds of democratic change during the inaugural year. It has initiated many innovative activities over the past year and a half. This includes a first-ever partnership with the royal government of Bhutan in spearheading media literacy efforts in schools through media clubs and through forums for teachers, teacher-trainees, and other stakeholders³¹.

BCMD has been instrumental in helping spread awareness of the need for media literacy and in building thinking skills in Bhutan. BCMD initiated another development, when it organised a seminar that brought together parliamentarians and media professionals, to focus on the media and the regulatory framework governing media in Bhutan. The seminar recommended ways to enhance access to information in Bhutan. In spring 2009, BCMD organized a group of academics and journalists at a conference to discuss an area that has been neglected in academia, “the role of constitutional monarchies in democracies today”³². These events and activities itself showed the promise of what a democratic Bhutan could be. But while the seeds have been planted, they need to be nurtured so that they can continue to bloom, multiply,

³⁰ For details see, www.bhutanobserver.bt/royal-kasho-for-bhutan-media-foundation

³¹ For details see, www.bhutancmd.org.bt/about-us/mission-and-objective

³² For details see, www.bhutancmd.org.bt/about-us/mission-and-objective

reach out and root democracy in Bhutan. The time has come for new thinking and action to build a culture of democracy in Bhutan.

AFPA-Bhutan

Association of Press Freedom Activists (AFPA) Bhutan was established on May 3, 2004 coinciding with International Press Freedom Day. APFA-Bhutan is a non-profit, apolitical, independent and social organization working especially for the right to speech of Bhutanese people, and establishment of freedom of the press and publicity in the country. It comprises young and dynamic journalists. It believes that press is one of the major components to demonstrate the extent of democratization of a country³³.

Member of young generation, who were deeply concerned about future of press freedom and democratization of Bhutan, formed the association. It was felt by this group of young men to communicate effectively with various groups of people and community in Bhutan. By means of facilitating interactions among the political forces and human rights groups, the association attempts to clarify concepts and build general understanding of the pro-democratic forces in Bhutan. Moreover APFA-Bhutan has ultimate mission to establish free press in Bhutan and it is continuously struggling for achieving it.

APFA-Bhutan runs various programs as part of its advocacy campaign for freedom of the press, and freedom of speech and expression of the Bhutanese people. Apfanews.com is the hourly updated news site run by the organization. APFA Bhutan publishes a newspaper called The Bhutan Reporter from its office in 'exile in

³³For details see, www.apfanews.com/about-s/

Kathmandu'³⁴. The paper is circulated through Nepal, India and Bhutan in hard copy. Readers can also access the paper online in PDF format for free download³⁵.

In collaboration with the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), it has published two reports on status of press freedom in Bhutan in the annual report of the IFJ for South Asia. In 2007, APFA also published a separate booklet on media situation in Bhutan including the historical background of Bhutanese media. This is the first instance of any publication specialized only on media in Bhutan.

To inspire more people to journalism and provide training to interested people in this field, APFA has Department of Human Resource Development. It conducts workshops, trainings and seminars regularly. Media Monitoring Section looks after developments in Bhutan related to media and press freedom. Department of International Relations coordinates with international media and press freedom organizations.

International Affiliation

Bangladesh-based Third World Media Network (TWMN), a watchdog of media freedom in least developed countries, approved for the affiliation of Bhutan Committee. The Bhutan Chapter of TWMN, launched in September 16, 2006. This is a clear indication of the fact that even international media bodies are conscious of the status of media situation inside Bhutan. As its end result, the headquarters of TWMN took firm decision to form its Bhutan Committee comprising only exiled journalists. Interestingly, the launching of the Bhutan Chapter of The South Asian Free Media Association (SAFMA) took place on August 5, 2007. Despite its commitment to advocate for press freedom in the country, the bhutan chapter of SAFMA has been a mute spectator to various incidents relating threat on media freedom³⁶. It seems that SAFMA is not so active, particularly in terms of raising voices for the guarantee of

³⁴ For details see, www.apfanews.com/about-s/

³⁵ For details see, www.afpanews.com/media-monitor/reports

³⁶ For details see, www.bhutannewsservice.com/main-news/journos-celebrate-safma-anniversary

media freedom in country. The effort of exiled journalists to seek affiliation at TWMN, which appeared to be successful, is one of the greatest achievements.

Pro-Democratic Movement in Bhutan

In 1989, his majesty king Jigme Sime Wangchuk mishandled with southern Bhutanese of Nepali origin and began to deprive their citizenship and culture. As a result the struggle for human rights, democracy and equality began in 1990s, the political parties formed at that time to lead the movement included press freedom in their demand list. Subsequently, the deployment of the military force in southern districts silenced the voices for freedom of speech and expression and freedom of the press³⁷. Those supporting this justifiable demand were called anti nationals and were evicted. These incidences attract the attention of human rights as well international organisations. This led to the strengthening of the fight for freedom of speech and express and the freedom of the press. In the end it resulted as a liberal policy towards media's freedom in Bhutan.

Donor Support

The government has encouraged donor support to the media. Constant and sustained donor support significantly helped the Bhutanese media to grow, develop and achieve a certain level of professionalism. The government has always encouraged and sought donor support for media. Some of the key donor agencies that have been supporting the Bhutanese media are: DANIDA, the government of India, UNESCO, and JICA. DANIDA has been supporting both BBS and *Kuensel* since 1993³⁸. It also helped install several media related soft and hard ware, including latest IMac computers, Xerox machines, scanners and other necessary technologies required in a printing house. It also supported both short and long-term training of journalists and other media professionals in *Kuensel*. Recently Japan committed some financial

³⁷ Kharat, S Rajesh (2005), *Foreign Policy of Bhutan*, New Delhi, Manak Publications.

³⁸ Siok, Sian Pek(2003), *Bhutan, Media Impact Study 2003*, Ministry of Information and Communications, Thimphu, pp17-18

assistance to *Kuensel* under Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects.³⁹

BBS also received considerable support from DANIDA in terms of laying the infrastructure. It financially supported BBS to start its FM service in 1997 and is now involved in nationwide expansion of FM radio service. The government of India has been of particular help to BBS. In 1991, it helped professionalize the radio studio receive frequent training opportunities from Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD) and Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Union (ABU) in Malaysia, Deutsche Welle TV Training Centre (DWTTTC) and Deutsche Welle Radio Training Centre (DWRTC) in Germany, and JICA. BBS also receives technical consultancies from some of these donor agencies.

Obstacles for Media Development in Bhutan

Here we will discuss some of the major obstacle for media development in Bhutan, these are Physical, technological, media and governmental. Geography is an overwhelming obstacle in building a national system.⁴⁰ Poor developing countries like Bhutan face challenges of geographic locations like rugged and dreadful terrain. Geographical barrier is one of the biggest challenges for media development in Bhutan. Lack of basic infrastructure such as a reliable road network deters transportation of the printed communication and equipment for broadcasting. This can be illustrated by a simple dilemma Bhutan faces today. Bhutan produces thousands of kilowatts of electricity, most of which is exported to the neighbouring India. Despite this, about 50 percent⁴¹ of Bhutanese today have no electricity simply because of the physical barriers presented by rugged mountains, deep gorges and thick forests. Hoisting electricity poles in this terrain is very difficult and a costly affair which Bhutan cannot afford to indulge in⁴². And this has significantly discouraged media

³⁹ For details see, www.Kuenselonline.com/2010/modules.php?name=news &file=article=5169

⁴⁰ Parsons, Paul (2004), 'Barriers to Media Development', in de Beer, Arnold S. & Merrill, John C. (eds.), *Global Journalism: Topical Issues and Media Systems*. Pearson: Boston

⁴¹ E. Standardsforum (2010), *Country Brief: BHUTAN*, New York.

⁴² Street light maintenance division, Gelephu Municipal Corporation Bhutan has provided data of roads with street light facilities, for detail see, www.dudh.gov.bt/gelephu/part3/

development and consequently accessibility, especially for the rural lot. This is precisely the reason why the BBS TV serves only the capital and the newspaper makes it to its destination long after news gets stale.

Technological barriers closely follow the physical barriers. Even if a country like Bhutan has the capital for improving technology, physical location poses serious threat to technological advancement. The rain in monsoon with simultaneous landslides and erosions often wash away the facilities that are already in place. Reconstructing and having them back in place is very costly for the government. Thus, in absence of technology, journalists are not able to perform well and the audience remains ignorant of what is happening around them. Until 1999 online journalism for Bhutanese journalists was out of question because there was no Internet.

Government barrier is another important factor that hinders professional journalism in Bhutan. Government authorities often deny access to information to journalists. Being a monarchy where the term 'democracy' was an anathema until a few years ago, the concept of existing governments put psychological pressure on journalists. Thus journalists often have to work under pressure with the Iron hand of government on their shoulder. Though Bhutan has already embraced democracy, hardcore bureaucrats, still see media as part of government. They often try to intimidate reporters if something is written against their ministries or departments.

Growth and Development of South Asian Media: An analysis

While the situation varies from country to country, but the most challenging issues for journalists and media workers in the south Asian region are violence directed by state and non-state actors. However, bureaucratic and legislative efforts by power-holders, seeking to silence the voice and freedom of press.

Afghanistan

Within Afghanistan, the media sector continues to expand and diversify, but the questions about sustainability and credibility still remain. Mass media law is a debated topic among the power holders and the public. Journalists and the media industry have not yet secured their claim to independent public service status. This could be in part because the growth of the media in the country has been unregulated and in many cases inconsistent. The risks are especially acute in the print media where growth has been restrained by low levels of literacy and poor distribution networks⁴³. It seems that there is no clear cut policy towards media. In this policy vacuum, the media has become a battleground for political factions. Several newspapers have emerged in Afghanistan with support of political parties and interest group. Similarly state owned media continues to enjoy stable employer for journalist while independent media is suffering.

A number of journalists have been murdered in Afghanistan over the year and several have been victimised for their critical reporting by both government and non-government actors. As a result Afghanistan's media is still in not free⁴⁴ zone.

Bangladesh

In the last decade, the growth of print and electronic media and a new generation of journalist have changed the face of the media in Bangladesh. Bangladesh improved from Not Free to Partly Free due to significant changes took place in Bhutan⁴⁵. Civilian government returned to the power and state of emergency was lifted. Hence media outlets reported more freely during 2009.in a positive development Mohammad Atiqullah Khan Masud, editor of the national daily *Jankantha* was released in January 2009.in the same year parliament of Bangladesh replaced the previous RTI Act which intended to improve transparency. Moreover journalist in Bangladesh still faces physical threat from security force including police

⁴³ Muralidharan, Sukumar (2010-2011), *Free speech in peril, Press freedom in south Asia*, IFJ Press Freedom report, p7

⁴⁴ Details has been discussed in third chapter

⁴⁵ For details see, www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=251&year=2010

and military intelligence. On a number of occasions in 2009, journalists were detained, threatened, or otherwise harassed by the authorities. Politicians and criminals and businessman use their power to influence the print media⁴⁶. Hence it is clear that, despite of improvement, media in Bangladesh still lacking support from the civilian government.

In *India*, the media has become mature comparatively with other south Asian nation. The dynamic growth that has been seen in the media over the past decade or so has shown signs of moderation. There are several media organisation and union, existed today for press freedom. India is a single country in south Asian region having Free Media status. However the past year has been one of increasing violence against journalists, particularly in the conflict-prone areas of Jammu and Kashmir and the North-East. Reporting in Maoist insurgency prone area is still a difficult task for journalists.

Paid news and cash for coverage are some major obstacles for the Indian media. Recently, influence of corporate over media person, reveals a threat to the media's credibility.

Nepal continues to function under an interim constitution that preserve guarantees on the right to free speech. Yet media rights remain a matter of concern. Government authorities have not hesitated to take a harshly step toward the assertion of these rights. Media rights have been one of the casualties, with attacks on the media increasing in various forms.

The legacy of Nepal's decade-long insurgency hangs on in the form of numerous vigilante as well as armed groups. The demobilisation process has made only broken progress and these groups still retain the ability to function as parallel systems of coercive power. The media is often the target and critical reporting often invites a harsh retaliation. But despite of all difficulties Nepal's media community and its journalists' unions have stepped up vigorously to the challenge the situation.

⁴⁶ Monty, A.N (2010). "Press freedom has its limitation in Bangladesh", CPJ Blog, 8 February 2010

The intensifying insurgency in parts of *Pakistan* and the unsettled security situation poses threat over media freedoms. Civil society hopes that the return of an elected government would lead to a significant improvement to media but it have been disprove. Media personnel in Pakistan are sandwiched between militants groups and political parties. Negative or contrary writing to their ideology is inviting threat to the life of journalists in Pakistan. This has been proved by so many incidence took place in the form of killing of journalist as well as kidnapping. The security forces share this attitude and also often react adversely to any media reporting, that does not unquestioningly favour their actions and policies. As a result, it becomes virtually impossible for journalists to work with reasonable freedom and objectivity. Journalists' unions in Pakistan continue to struggle for having their freedom of expression.

A quarter century of armed conflict in *Sri Lanka* has deteriorated, especially in terms of the functioning of the media and the security of journalists and other media staff. In October 2008, a delegation from the International Press Freedom and Freedom of Expression Mission⁴⁷ to Sri Lanka assessed the current media situation. This mission found deterioration in the press freedom, marked by continuing murders of journalist, attack, harassment and abduction. It also found that in the north and east region of country lacked press access and independent information. There was also self censorship by the media on the realities of the war. According to the Amnesty International at least 14 journalists at news organisations have been killed by suspected government paramilitaries and rebels since the beginning of 2006.

As with other countries in the region, the Sri Lankan media community, represented by the five main journalists' organisations, has shown worthy courage in facing these adversities. Their struggles have become illustrative of the range of strategies available for South Asia's journalists, as they seek to cope with national situations, which are gradually becoming more complex and dangerous.

⁴⁷ International Media Support (2008), *Media under fire: Press Freedom Lockdown in Sri Lanka*, International Press Freedom and Freedom of Expression Mission

In *Maldives* recent year have seen significant improvement in terms of political environment and respect for freedom of expression. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom handed over the reigns of power to Mohamed Nasheed in election of October 2008. Maldives adopted constitution in August 2008 which includes strong guarantees of freedom of expression. As far as the development of media is concerned it is in its emerging phase.

In the print media sector, there appears to be significant influence by owners over content, particularly politically sensitive material. Only a small number of newspapers appear to be profitable, and even then almost entirely as a result of government advertising. This leaves newspapers open to influence by owners, and many owners have strong political connections.

The Media Council Law, signed into law in November 2008 by the outgoing Gayoom government, establishes a Media Council to address complaints against the media⁴⁸. There have been complaints about the degree of independence of the Council as established by the Media Council Law. However the Law does include a number of measures to promote independence. The Council has the power to investigate complaints and to order media outlets to publish its adjudications.

As mention earlier, that media in Maldives is in infancy phase, have not transparent media policy as well as guidelines. There is need of independent regulatory authority to support and guide the media.

Media Other Than South Asia: Situation in Zimbabwe

In this age of information where media in Bhutan is growing and playing the important role in introducing democracy at the same time government of Zimbabwe have strong hold over the print media. The government controls six newspapers—two daily, two Sunday, and two weekly. State-controlled *Herald* and *Chronicle* , the *Sunday Mail* and *Sunday News* , and the weekly *Manica Post* and *Kwaedza/Umthunya*

⁴⁸ Mendel, Toby (2009), *Assessment of Media Development in Maldives*, UNESCO, Media development indicators, p8

are used regularly to propagate government and ruling party policies and propaganda and to attack government opponents, both domestic and foreign⁴⁹.

Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) those who violate its provisions, mainly in the private media or among foreign journalists, face fines and up to 2 years in prison. So far, 12 journalists have been charged under the AIPPA, many charged with publishing false information. None of them have been from the state media, even though opponents have accused state journalists of publishing false information⁵⁰.

The private media has struggled to survive under difficult conditions. Generally, all private forms have been vibrant. They have been critical of the government and the state media. They have tried to play a watchdog role by holding the government accountable for its actions. They have published stories that the state media dare not touch and have also been outlets for the views of those who oppose the Zimbabwe government. Whereas the government media has lost advertising and circulation revenue, the private media has increased circulation and advertising dollars. The AIPPA is, however, likely to make life more difficult for the private media and private journalists, as well as for the foreign media⁵¹.

The kind of growth and development of print media in Bhutan has visualized since last five years, it can only be said that now the trend is changing. Coming of Private ownership in newspaper and in other media has created a new atmosphere for growth and development of media in Bhutan. In other words it has broken the path of monopoly of government over media's development and its functioning. However there is a need of some more legislation in support of media which actually provide safeguard to the media personal. Government has already adopted some liberal policy towards media, but their indirect control in the form funding agency is haunting most. International supports are already there but most of the fund being utilized in

⁴⁹ Kumbula, Tendayi (1997), Press Freedom in Zimbabwe, In *Press Freedom and Communication in Africa*, eds, Festus Eribo and William Jong-Ebot. Africa World Press.

⁵⁰ Faringer, Gunilla L. (1991), *Press Freedom in Africa*, New York: Praeger.

⁵¹ *Press Freedom in Zimbabwe*, (1993), Harare, Zimbabwe: The Willie Musarurwa Memorial Trust.

electronic media as well as for infrastructure development, as a result print media is still lacking for fund. Comparing with media of other than India in south Asia, Bhutan is on right path. More or less overall development of print media in a very small span of time gives a kind of assurance to the world that being a newly democratic country it has more opportunity to become a developed and responsible media.

CHAPTER 3

PRINT MEDIA AND BHUTANESE SOCIETY

Bhutanese people are consciously or subconsciously, absorbing information more than their requirement every day. The Media Impact Study 2008 shows a severe increase, in the diversity and complexity of the Bhutanese media environment from 2003 (MIS 2003). Access to all media information, entertainment, and advertisement has grown tremendously in the past five years. Expanding infrastructure, more equipment in the market, and changing government policy has permitted media to grow. With the expansion of the road network, reach of electricity and telephone, computers, and internet connections including broadband are now available. There are more books, magazines, and newspapers, national as well as international radio and television, films, music tapes and CDs, mobile phones, and Internet. However, the urban-rural bias in media access remains, and the disparity in access to media between urban and rural areas remain proportionately unchanged since 2003. Media content is known to reflect the nature of a society. The most significant change between 2003 and 2008 was that while, in 2003, regular consumers used media for information, in 2008, they used media for entertainment. Bhutanese newspapers enjoy greater credibility than the international print media. Asked which paper was believable, 14.1% said *Kuensel*, 6.5% said *Bhutan Observer* and 6.2% said *Bhutan Times*. However emergence of more media has resulted in media expressing greater freedom but made people to question the accuracy, thus affecting the credibility.

Kuensel, which is 51 percent government-owned, is still the dominant newspaper in terms of nation-wide reach. It continues to provide coverage that is also critical of the bureaucracy though some of the fully privately owned newspapers are making inroads into the market. *Business Bhutan*, which started in 2009, is being noticed for its regular criticism of the Government, with reports on official corruption, while *The Bhutan Observer* attempts to focus on social issues. *Bhutan Times* underwent a change in management when many in the editorial team walked out, protesting management interference. *Bhutan Times* also saw a second round of staff changes as

its interim managing director, who is also a member of the board of directors, left his post in 2010 after almost a year at the newspaper. A new managing director and editor were appointed.

Media Access

Access is always a major issue in Bhutan, given its rugged topography and geographic location. The new technologies, however, are helping to gradually pull down these traditional barriers like, the rugged terrain and distance between communities. Not all Bhutanese residents have access to media. Low rate of literacy and ignorance of the importance of media are the major causes for not widening the public access to media. However, the urban population is growing conscious towards the media and its importance. Indian and other foreign newspapers are also available in the market but they are limited to Paro, Thimphu, Phuentsholing and few other cities¹. Bhutan's low literacy rate, however, means that the majority of the population in rural areas is not affected by the print media. Oral tradition is very strong, and radio broadcasts are relatively more widely listened to.

In her report, Siok Sian Pek-Dorji recognizes three major elements of accessibility as: infrastructure, equipment, and affordability. Her study found that overall media access in Bhutan has actually improved over the last few years. Her studies also found out that there was a marked difference in household's access to media between the urban and rural areas.²

It is a common knowledge that radio is the most effective media in Bhutan given its reach and affordability. BBS estimates that 79 percent of Bhutanese listen to the radio.³ For most people residing in far-flung corners of Bhutan radio is the only source of information, education and entertainment. Bhutanese people usually don't mind listening to anything in radio. Hence, they often tune to foreign radio channels, especially the BBC and others from India and Nepal. Television has fast replaced radio as the source of information and entertainment in the urban pockets of Bhutan.

¹ Mishra, T.P (2009) "Becoming a journalist in exile", *TWIN - Bhutan Chapter*, p56

² Pek-Dorji, Sok Sian (2003), *Media Impact Study 2003*, MediaCom: Bhutan., p35

³ Bhutan Broadcasting Service (2004), *BBS Concept Paper*. Thimphu. Bhutan

The spread is moving on to semi-urban part of the country. Where people have no access to cable TV and those who can afford have installed antennae dishes. Cable TV with international channels has taken over the Bhutanese households in absence of quality programmes from the BBS TV. But all in all, TV is still urban population's prerogative. It will take some time yet, before TV reaches to all part of Bhutan.

Media agencies like Indo Asian News Service, British Broadcasting Corporation etc. produce reports on Bhutanese events frequently. Of all foreign media, IANS (Indo-Asian news service) has been observed to have stronger hold in covering the Bhutanese issues⁴.

Print media coverage and consumption

Kuensel

Launched On: *1986*

Mission / Vision: *That the people shall be informed / to be the leading media company*

Location: *Changzamtog*

Name of Managing Director: *Mr. Chencho Tshering*

List of Areas Distributed: *Nationwide, SAARC Countries & Overseas*

Type of Issue (Daily/Weekly/Monthly/Quarterly, etc...): *Daily paper – Six days a week*

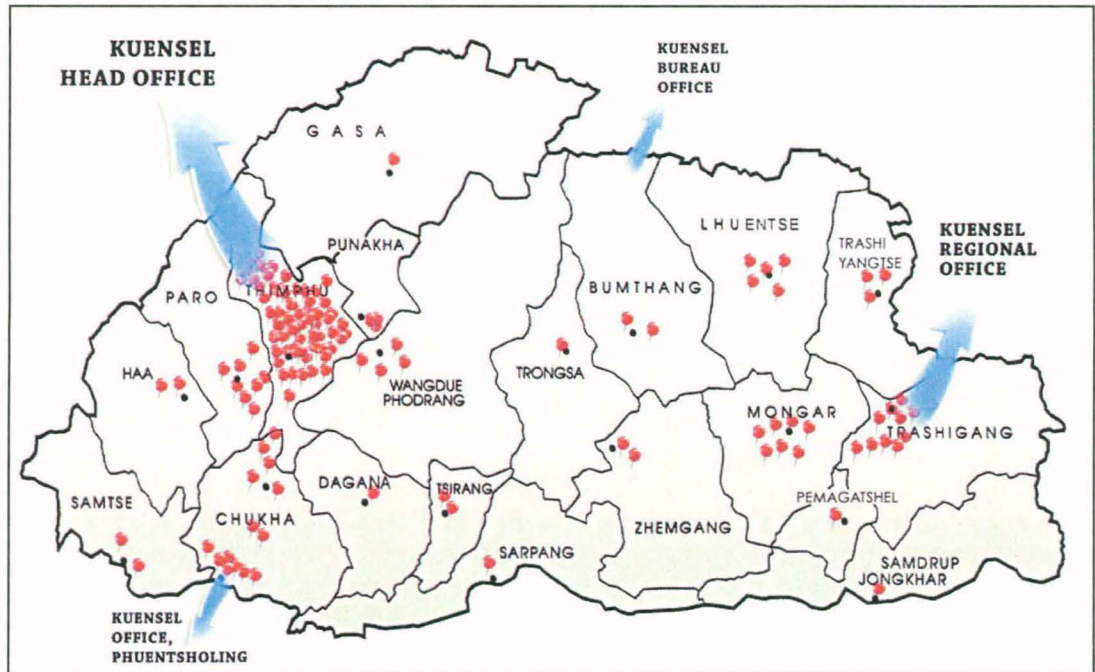
Sections covered: *Home, Government, Politics, Crime, Developments, Fashion, Sports, International news etc.*

Website: *www.Kuenselonline.com*

Human Resources: *Total Employees: 154*

⁴ Mishra, T.P. (2009) "Becoming a journalist in exile", *TWMN - Bhutan Chapter*, p57

Figure 3.1: Agency of *Kuensel*



***Kuensel* Agents in Bhutan**

| | |
|---------------|--|
| THIMPHU | <i>Kuensel</i> Corporation Ltd., Thimphu, Bhutan. editor@ <i>Kuensel</i> .com.bt |
| KANGLUNG | <i>Kuensel</i> Regional Office Khangma, Kanglung |
| BUMTHANG | Bureau Office |
| PHUENTSHOLING | Bureau Office Phuentsholing, Chhukha |

Source: - www.Kuenselonline.com

The primary role of *Kuensel* is to provide news about Bhutan to the Bhutanese. Its 20-page format includes six pages of home news, one page of an opinion section, three pages of international news (one page each for world news, sports news and science and health), six pages of advertisement, two pages of literary section and two pages of leisure. *Kuensel* provides four other services that are very significant. First, its editorial section discusses issues of public importance and

concern that may have an impact on national policy. Second, its opinion column enables people to express their views and opinions. Third, its literary section encourages the youth to write stories and poems, thereby improving their literary habits. Fourth, its advertisement section informs people about the availability of jobs⁵.

It is fact that district headquarters moves further from Thimphu, the distribution of *Kuensel* becomes sparse. However, its readership is very limited in the villages. Retired civil servants, *gups* and *chimis*⁶, community teachers and extension workers only read it occasionally as and when it is available through post or from friends. It is also estimated that 25.3% of Thimphu population purchase *Kuensel* weekly and 10.1% occasionally. Similarly, 5.8% of the Paro population purchase *Kuensel* weekly and 13.1% occasionally, and 2.5% weekly and 5.8% occasionally in Wangduephodrang⁷. The following table shows the readers' choice of language in five *Dzongkhags*⁸.

Table 3.1: *Kuensel* readership by language in different districts.

| S.L No | Dzonghag | <i>Kuensel</i> readership by language in percentage | | |
|--------|----------|---|----------|--------|
| | | English | Dzongkha | Nepali |
| 1 | Chukha | 72.9 | 21.8 | 16.6 |
| 2 | Paro | 60.2 | 58.4 | 0 |
| 3 | Thimpu | 84.2 | 35.1 | 4.1 |
| 4 | Punakha | 55.7 | 71.8 | 0 |
| 5 | Wangdue | 55.4 | 71.8 | 0 |

Source: *Kuensel* Reader Survey, *Kuensel/CSO/Danida*,

⁵ RGOB (2008). *Development Towards Gross National Happiness*, p68

⁶ People's representatives to the National Assembly

⁷ For details see, *Kuensel* Reader Survey, *Kuensel/CSO/Danida*, 2008

⁸ Phuntsho, Raptan (2008), "Mass Media: Its Consumption and Impact on Residents of Thimpu and Rural Areas", *Journal of Bhutan Studies*, vol.3 no. 1, p179

It is evident from the above table that readers in general still prefer the English language edition. This is an indication that *Dzongkha*, the national language, which is the Bhutanese national and cultural identity, still needs to be promoted. The total readership for all editions of *Kuensel* is estimated at 125,000. However, the readership of *Kuensel* is very poor in rural areas.

The following table shows the significant choice of reading.

Table 3.2: Reading Preferences (Percentage of readers)

| S.I No | Contents of <i>Kuensel</i> | Want more | Don't read |
|--------|----------------------------|-----------|------------|
| 1 | National newspaper | 41.7 | 2.2 |
| 2 | Leisure | 30.2 | 7.6 |
| 3 | International news | 25.9 | 15.2 |
| 4 | Literary | 23.2 | 7.6 |
| 5 | Letters and viewpoints | 18.6 | 16.7 |
| 6 | Editoeials | 13.7 | 23.4 |

Source: *Kuensel* Reader Survey, *Kuensell/CSO/Danida*,

Bhutan Times Ltd

Launched On: *30th April, 2006*

Mission / Vision: *To become one of the best print media in the country*

Location: *Lhaki Shopping Complex, Hongkong Market, Thimphu*

Name of Managing Director: *Wangcha Sangey*

List of Areas distributed: *20 Dzongkhags (paper circulation)*

Type of Issue (Daily/Weekly/Monthly/Quarterly, etc...): *Weekly (Sunday)*

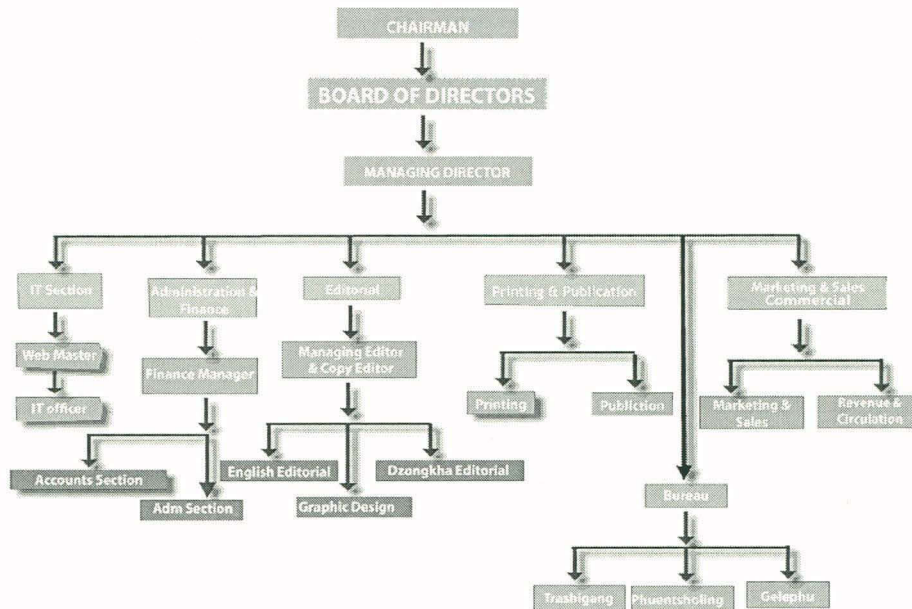
Sections covered: *All*

Website: *www.bhutantimes.bt*

Human Resources: *Total Employees: 30*

Source:-[www.bhutwntimes.bt/about us](http://www.bhutwntimes.bt/about-us)

Figure 3.2 Structure of Management, *Bhutan Times*



Source: - [www.bhutantimes.bt/about us](http://www.bhutantimes.bt/about-us)

Agents in Bhutan

- Thimpu
- Trashigang
- Phuentsholing
- Gelephu

Bhutan Observer pvt.

Launched On: 2nd June, 2006

Location: Norzin Lam, Post Box: 1112 Thimphu

Name of Managing Director: Tenzin Wangdi (CEO)

List of Areas Distributed: *Nation Wide*
Type of Issue (Daily/Weekly/Monthly/Quarterly, etc...): *Bi-Weekly*
Sections covered: *All section of the society with focus on rural areas*
Website: *www.bhutnobserver.bt*
Human Resources: *Total Employees: 60*

Source:- [www.bhutanobser.bt/about us](http://www.bhutanobser.bt/about-us)

Bhutan Today Pvt. Ltd.

Launched On: *30th October 2008*
Location: *Thimphu, Bhutan*
Name of Managing Director: *Tenzin Dorji (CEO)*
List of Areas Distributed: *Nation Wide*
Type of Issue (Daily/Weekly/Monthly/Quarterly, etc...): *Daily*
Sections covered: *All section of the society*
Website: *www.bhutantoday.bt*
Human Resources: *Total Employees: More than 40*

Source:-[www.bhutantoday.bt/about us](http://www.bhutantoday.bt/about-us)

Business Bhutan Pvt. Limited

Launched On: *26th September 2009*
Location: *Norzin Lam, Post Box: 1190, Thimphu*
Name of Managing Director: *Tshering wangchuk (CEO)*
List of Areas Distributed: *Nation Wide*
Type of Issue (Daily/Weekly/Monthly/Quarterly, etc...): *Weekly*
Sections covered: *All section of the society with focus on the Business Community and other News*
Website: *www.businessbhutan.bt*
Human Resources: *Total Employees: 40*

Newspapers and Affordability

Newspapers are less popular than radio (BBS Radio, Kuzoo FM) and BBS TV. Most respondents said they read *Kuensel* (34.67%), followed by *Bhutan Times* (21.7%) and *Bhutan Observer* (20.9%)⁹. Urban readers outnumber rural readers. In terms of occupations, the three main groups of newspaper readers are civil servants, people in business and farmers.

Newspaper access is also affected by the delays in distribution. Except for *Kuensel*, which prints in the East and is delivered on the same day, the other papers take from one to three days to reach all the districts. People outside Thimphu said they want their newspapers to be available on the day of publication or the news would be outdated. This accounts for the popularity of radio and TV as news sources in Bhutan¹⁰.

When it comes to prices of local newspapers and magazines, one third of the sampled population, (32.7%) said they are affordable and only about 10% said the prices of print media is expensive¹¹.

Some people, feels that newspapers are expensive compared with Indian newspapers, which cost only Rupees Three. With more newspapers on the market, people say that they are now beginning buying only one or two newspapers.

Accessibility also depends on language use in a country like Bhutan where media are provided in the national language, the working language (English), and on radio in Sarchop and Lhotshampa.

Dzongkha is the language most people use to watch Bhutanese TV (48.5%) and listen to Bhutanese radio (52.2%), compared with people who watch/listen to the English

⁹ For details see. Ministry of information and communication survey report 2008.

¹⁰ Mehta, Sanjeev (2007), "Role of *Kuensel* in Fostering Democracy in Bhutan". *Proceedings of Seminar on Media and Public Culture, Centre for Bhutan Studies, Thimpu*, pp309-11

¹¹ Royal Government of Bhutan (2008), *Bhutan. Media Impact Study 2008*, Ministry of Information and Communications, Thimphu, p23

programmes. Urban viewers of *Dzongkha* programmes are more than twice the number of rural viewers. Similarly, there are more urban viewers of English programmes. A very small number - 7% for radio, 0.7% TV and 0.3% for newspapers use the media in Nepali, Sarchop and Hindi languages¹².

Newspapers are available largely to the urban, English-speaking. It is interesting to note that there is very little difference between the numbers of urban and rural readers of *Dzongkha* newspapers. The survey shows that more people read in English (29.7%) than *Dzongkha* (19.8%). In terms of income level and language used for reading, the number of people in the lower income group (less than Nu.6,000/-) reading in English and *Dzongkha* are almost the same¹³.

In the next higher income bracket (6,000/- to 10,000/-), the number of English readers nearly double people who read in *Dzongkha*, indicating the level of education. This indicates that people who have modern education earn higher salaries and are more conversant in English.

The figures confirm that there is a larger *Dzongkha* speaking audience for radio and TV while newspapers are read more in English.

Print Media and Civil Society of Bhutan

According to the report of ministry of information and communication (2008), and specially survey done by an author Sanjeev Mehta, we come across some understanding about people's response towards print media. In his paper *Role of Kuensel in fostering democracy in Bhutan* have provided some interesting figure. Of the 141 samples, 98 (69.5%) were male and 43 (30.5%) were female. The respondents were asked the questions: Do you read *Kuensel*? And do you read editorials in *Kuensel*? Those who responded negatively to the first question were removed from the study.

¹² Royal Government of Bhutan (2008), *Bhutan, Media Impact Study 2008*, Ministry of Information and Communications, Thimphu.

¹³ Royal Government of Bhutan (2008), *Bhutan, Media Impact Study 2008*, Ministry of Information and Communications, Thimphu

As the table (3.3) suggests, a small segment of the respondents i.e. only 29% read *Kuensel* regularly, while 44.7% respondents said that they read it more or less regularly. About 26% of the respondents accepted that they read *Kuensel* only occasionally. Only 16.3% of the female respondents reported reading *Kuensel* regularly, which is less than half of the male respondents i.e. - 34.7%. On the same line, more of the female respondents (30.2%) as compared to the male respondents (24.5%) conveyed that they read *Kuensel* only occasionally.

When asked about their habit of reading editorials 23.4% of respondents conveyed that they read editorials regularly. A predominant majority, i.e. 68%, shows that they read editorials only sometimes, while 8.5% of the respondents never read editorials. As far as the habit of reading editorials is concerned there is less of a sharp difference between male and female respondents as compared to reading the *Kuensel* itself. These gender based differences in the reading habits are largely due to the fact that females are less interested in political affairs.

Table 3.3: Reading *Kuensel*

| | Male | Female | Total |
|------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Regularly | 34(34.7%) | 7(16.3%) | 41(29.1%) |
| More or less regularly | 40(40.8%) | 23(53.5%) | 63(44.7%) |
| Occasionally | 24(24.55) | 13(30.2%) | 37(26.2%) |
| Total | 98 | 43 | 141 |

Table 3.4: Reading Editorial

| | Male | Female | Total |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|
| Regularly | 25(25.5%) | 8(8.18.6%) | 41(29.1%) |
| Only sometimes | 65(66.3%) | 31(72.1%) | 96(68.1%) |
| Never | 8(8.2%) | 4(9.3%) | 12(8.5%) |
| Total | 98 | 43 | 141 |

Newspapers are providing more entertainment and attractive pages which is not so important as far as information is concern. Many people gave remark on pictures of half-naked film stars. Many people say that it is a sign of media's new-found liberty but question if this is relevant to Bhutanese society. A Thimphu, mother says her children like the newspaper only for the film stars while another woman in Trashigang says, she has seen groups of people buy the newspaper and throw away the news section, reading only the entertainment pages. She and older readers, however, find that there's very little substance¹⁴.

While newspapers with large pictures of the royal family and religious personalities seem to sell better, it is also making people in rural areas concerned. Several people remarked: "Newspapers should not print pictures of the Kings, religious personalities, or *kuthangs* (pictures of deities) and *throngdels* (giant thanghas). These pictures are desecrated when people walk on them or even use the papers to wrap food and meat¹⁵.

People also feel uncomfortable and even offended with the very graphic pictures that newspapers have been publishing. The picture of a foetus that appeared in a story on *Bhutan Times* led to spontaneous remarks across all focus groups. People felt that it

¹⁴ Royal Government of Bhutan (2008), *Media Impact Study*, p32

¹⁵ Ibid, p33

was too violent to be shown and were concerned that their children will be affected by the picture since they are old enough to also read newspapers¹⁶.

Sustainability of Media in Bhutan

A significant characteristic of Bhutan's print media is that it is openly dependent on the Government as a source of funding. Aside from advertising support, newspapers often ask for direct government subsidies. Existing papers have also approached the Government to stop licensing new publications, in order to ensure their survival. Many newspaper managers continue to speak out against a liberal licensing policy, stating that Bhutan is too small a market for so many newspapers. The Government's rough estimate of total advertising spending in Bhutan's media market – mentioned at the Media Development Symposium 2010 – is about Bhutanese Ngultrum (BTN) 300 million (or roughly about USD 6.8 million at current rates)¹⁷. The bulk comes out of government sources. The print media, particularly, feel so dependent on this funding that they have consistently approached the Government to distribute its advertising funds equally to all newspapers.

Government advertising, including educational campaigns, election notices, tenders, and public notices are the largest advertising content. Government budget has sustained media growth in the past, it will also place a limit on the number of media houses that can survive in the Bhutanese market. There is likely to be growing competition among the existing media and newcomers, forcing more innovation in the media and perhaps pressuring some to resort to populist moves and becoming more sensational.

Credibility of Media

Since last five years, awareness about media in Bhutanese society has increased. Now they are more capable of thinking about media's nature and its behaviour which does matter for their society and culture. There is a clear difference

¹⁶ Ibid, p34

¹⁷ IFJ Report (2010-11), *free speech in peril: press freedom in south Asia*, p17

between people opinion about the media in 2003 and 2008. Being a society which adopted democracy very recently, importance of media matters a lot. However, for any democratic country media is like a fourth pillar. There were mixed reactions to the credibility of the media in MIS 2003. The educated elite thought that the media was controlled by the Government. Rural people generally believed the media but some said they the media focused only on urban development. However this perception has been changed because to maintain the creditability of media among the society the Government has passed the media law and regulations and even initiated a “code of ethics for journalists” in an attempt to ensure media professionalism and credibility. The regulatory Authority, BICMA, has also been monitoring media trends and issuing warning letters to media for not following regulations and “standards of decency.

In MIS 2003, few people questioned the media. People perceived the media as being ‘official’ and generally believed the Government. Media professionals believe that people generally did not question the media, because of their limited education and tradition of being dependent on the Government. This is still relevant in rural area where peoples think as “This is our Government, why should our Government lie to us?” But things are changing. People are tries to see the biases in media and speak more openly and more freely. On media credibility society thinks that TV is more believable, because they see the picture but in print there are sometimes distortions of facts. However, Bhutanese newspapers enjoy greater creditability than international print media, largely because fewer peoples read international papers and magazines. As far as believability of Bhutanese newspapers is concerned, *Kuensel* has number one, *Bhutan Observer* is second and *Bhutan Times* is third position.

For the public, it is disconcerting when newspapers start fighting among themselves. Some respondents say that media are losing credibility, because of the competition that drives them to write anything that sells. “Media exaggerate stories to make people buy newspapers¹⁸.”

¹⁸ Royal Government of Bhutan (2008), *Media Impact Study 2008*, Ministry of Information and Communications, Thimphu, p41

A Sherubtse College student said: “The media may be creating this kind of news to show a negative image of their competitor. How can media be reliable if they do this?” Others attribute it to a lack of news in Bhutan, thus forcing media to “create” news. “In India there are bomb blasts and murders but here in Bhutan there are no news so media have to create the news or they will be out of business,” said another college student¹⁹.

People also question media’s right to edit their contributions. What emerges, is a sense that media are no longer untouchable, compared with the early days when whatever was provided on BBS, for example, was considered to be of common good. People are learning to question the media and are judging, what they read, hear and see. With new media coming onto the scene, there is a sense of greater questioning as they see many angles to one story. Recent stories, questioning the accuracy of news reports among the print media, have also resulted in people becoming more sceptical of the accuracy of media in Bhutan. It all shows a sense of greater understanding, although much more need to be done to raise their media literacy.

Many of the newspaper’s managements lost credibility among readers, when they refused to submit their circulation and other figures, to a professional audit team from India. Of all Bhutan’s newspapers, only *Kuensel* and the *Bhutan Observer* agreed to the audit. Newspapers are also struggling to meet their staffing requirements in view of the small number of trained media professionals working in the country²⁰.

More experienced journalists are moving from one publication to another, while most editorial teams comprise young reporters with limited experience. Given the deadlines and commercial pressures, private newspapers in particular are not investing in professional training.

¹⁹ Ibid, p 42

²⁰ IFJ Report (2010-11), *free speech in peril: press freedom in south Asia*, p16

Freedom of Press

The definition of freedom of the press seems to differ from country to country. An official definition of free press is, “a press not restricted or controlled by government censorship regarding politics or ideology²¹”. The idea of a free press is a new concept in Bhutan, it was written that the media here must help society to understand change and, in the process, define and promote the right values, including public values. Views of the print media and free press in Bhutan differ when viewed from different perspectives. It means how reader, employees of newspapers and government officials, all have different points of views, on what it means to have a free press, and whether or not the press in Bhutan is open.

The readers of the newspapers in Bhutan all have different ideas about, whether it is in fact free or if it is managed by the government. It seems as though many Bhutanese readers believe that, all the newspapers are in some way controlled by the government. They consider this in their best interest due to Bhutan’s fragile state globally, because it is a time of governmental change, and also the media in the country is so new.

Those from within the government, seem to be worried about a free press that, sensationalizes and does not have the best interest of the readers in mind. They fear that if the newspapers are given free reign, they will sensationalize stories in order to build their readership. While none of the three newspapers receive subsidy from the government, their main source of advertising is the government, the government therefore indirectly funds all three newspapers. This idea of government control, through subsidy has been written about in both Bhutanese publications, as well as publications from around the world.

According to T.P Mishra (TWMN), at a time when media professionals and press freedom practitioners are celebrating ‘World Press Freedom Day, around the globe

²¹ “Free press”. Definition, 2, Dictionary.com

quite delightfully, Bhutanese people are worried of exercising even their fundamental right to free speech and expression in the country. Bhutanese people were not allowed even to raise questions during the election campaign hours. People in southern parts of the country, who wished if the party involved in campaigns would resolve refugee issue after winning the election, were even reported to have received mental tortures.

Media houses operating inside the country, feared bringing such issues to public, as they are still strictly under the government control. And, a limited number of foreign journalists were permitted to cover elections. These facts adequately reveal that, the concluded election in Bhutan was not free and fair. And, this is simply because press freedom, that measures state of democracy, is not guaranteed in this country. The persistent campaigns and efforts by prodemocracy Bhutanese, who favour guarantee of free press for the dawn of democracy, have always failed in awakening the Druk regime in guaranteeing media freedom in the country. This kind of attitude, latter undermines it Sub Article 5 under Article 7 of the draft constitution states²².

Even today, many foreign channels are banned in Bhutan. There is much to be done by the international rights and press freedom bodies, for the establishment of democracy with true guarantee of free press in Bhutan. Simply publicizing media situation reports or issuing just press releases, would pave no way for media freedom in this tiny Himalayan kingdom. Government in Bhutan should admit the fact, that democracy in absence of free press carries no meaning and significance in actuality. These cannot be compromise in guaranteeing free press, where people will have a better environment, to exercise their right to speech and expression that, UDHR (universal declaration of human rights) has guaranteed²³.

According to an author Dorji wangchuk, who talks about Threats to press freedom in Bhutan, are External and internal. From external restrictions include censorship, legislation, government regulations, and other measures and practices that restrict the job of pressmen. In an editorial for *Bhutan Times*, Editor Tashi Phuntsho writes, media may be granted freedom, but when there is censorship at the source of events, it defeats the purpose. The door is increasingly shut to us. Despite the rapid pace of

²² T.P Mishra (2008), "Press freedom in Bhutan", *Bhutan Media Blogspot*, 2 May 2008

²³ T.P Mishra (2008), "Press freedom in Bhutan", *Bhutan Media Blogspot*, 2 May 2008

progress, and the overall achievement in socio-economic spheres, the sad reality is that restrictions exist²⁴. Peoples still prefer to operate in secrecy, within their little pond, totally fearful of any external presence. Such an attitude neither promise well for the establishment nor for the press itself. However it undermines the national policy of efficiency, accountability.

Threats from within are internal (individual or institutional) threats. These are as dangerous as external threats. In case of Bhutan, they are even more. The irresponsibility, inaccuracy, and lack of professionalism by media personnel, as well as editors do for personal gain. Again the fault does not lie entirely with the journalist. Sometimes the reason could be simple, low salary and poor working conditions. Unless a journalist enjoys a good pay and a decent living standard, he or she would fall prey to corruption²⁵.

Institutional threats are caused by owners as well as editors and journalists. Managers, who have no background in media, do not recognise media-persons as professionals and moreover tends to advise the subordinates. Internal threats degrade the credibility, responsibility, and journalistic ethics of the press.

Freedom of Press in South Asia: A Report

On May 3, 2009 World Press Freedom Day, the International Federation of Journalists released the second annual IFJ Press Freedom Report for South Asia, 'The Story Behind the News: Journalists and Press Freedom in South Asia'

The year since May 2003, has been a turbulent time for journalists in South Asia. As in previous years, governments, insurgents, terrorists, corrupt officials, gangsters and fundamentalists of all religions, were seen to be targeting media for its free and fearless reporting.

Despite major challenges and difficult political situations in the region, there were many examples of the work of journalists in highlighting discrimination, promoting

²⁴ Dorji Wangchuk (2007), "Media in the New Political Order", *proceedings of Seminar on media and public culture, Centre for Bhutan studies*, Thimpu, p 285

²⁵ Ibid, p 285

peace and resisting attempts at censorship and repression.

The second annual report on press freedom in South Asia has been coordinated by the International Federation of Journalists, the global voice for journalists. The report, covering Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, the Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka records and spotlights a worrying trend of increasing violence against journalists, including the deaths of at least 121 journalists and other media workers in the one year itself.

The report also monitors, the commitment of governments across the region and their actions on press freedom, saying: "Ruthless criminality and political indifference often mean that little can be done to stop determined killers. But governments must continue to be challenged. They must respect democratic rights, investigate and follow up every attack and be held accountable when there is official complacency, negligence or, as in some cases, official complicity in attacks on media²⁶."

The report shows that, journalism in South Asia continues to be a risky affair. Journalists operating in regions of civil, political unrest and ethnic violence, do so under enormous pressure, on both their safety and their ability, to do their job freely. In many cases, the attacks on journalists could be directly linked to their free and fearless reporting.

Journalists need support not only to do their jobs in safety, but they also need professional training and proper working conditions.

A coalition of journalists' organisations and press freedom groups in South Asia, continue to challenge those, which violate press freedom and independent journalism, through protest and solidarity actions. The publication of this report, which documents and publicizes violations, with contributions from organisations across the region, is one of these solidarity actions.

²⁶ IFJ Asia-pacific report (2010), *Under fire: south Asia press freedom in south Asia 2008-09*, p1

While there have been some positive developments in improving media freedom in South Asia, sadly these are grossly overshadowed by attacks, and persecution of the press the report concludes.

The opinion of journalists and print media from other parts of the world (journalism in the west) are neither analogous nor unchanging. Brian Cathcart, a Journalism professor at Kingston University wrote, “This is a world where ethical lines are neither defined nor observed. Yet we journalists keep telling people that there is nothing to be done about it, or that it is all innocent fun, or that the victims are asking for it, or that it is a regrettable but necessary by product of freedom of speech²⁷”.

Others argue that because there is no censorship from the government in American papers, they are full of sensationalism and embellishment, it was written, “Now whatever self-censorship is avoided is surely overcompensated by the distribution of falsehoods, exaggeration, and sensationalism. The public in a participatory democracy is no better off for it²⁸”. Competition between newspapers in the Western world is so intense that many believe that it leads to the publication of half truths²⁹. It can therefore be said that when there is a complete lack of censorship, and the press is free, it can be free to cover stories that are not in the best interest of the public.

Outside Perception

In an annual survey of press freedom worldwide, Freedom House rated the Bhutan media “partly free, giving them point. PR- 4, CL-5

The level of press freedom is measured using 4 criteria

- 1) Laws and regulations that influence media content
- 2) Political pressures and controls on media content
- 3) Economic influences over media content

²⁷ Cathcart, Brian (2007), “Trust us. We are journalist”, *The new statesman*, 5 February 2007.

²⁸ Ashdown, Gerald g. (2007), “Journalism police”, *The Marquette law review*, p757

²⁹ Ibid, p759

4) Repressive actions

On the basis of these criteria, there is a single country in south Asian region within free category. Whereas Afghanistan is rated as not free and rest of the country within partly free category

Although such a survey may not be entirely accurate, it is a reflection from the outside and how the world assesses the credibility of Bhutanese media.

Table 3.5: Freedom in the world 2011, table of independent countries

| Territory | Freedom status | PR | CL | Trend arrow |
|-------------|----------------|-----|----|-------------|
| Afghanistan | Not free | 6 | 6 | ↓ |
| Bangladesh | Partly free | 3 | 4 | |
| Bhutan | Partly free | 4 | 5 | |
| India | Free | 2 | 3 | |
| Maldives | Partly free | 3 | 4 | |
| Nepal | Partly free | 4 | 4 | |
| Pakistan | Partly free | 4 | 5 | |
| Sri Lanka | Partly free | 5 ▽ | 4 | |

PR and CL Strands for the political rights and civil liberties, respectively; 1 represent the most free and 7 the least free rating.

△ ▽ Up or down indicates an improvement or decline in ratings or status since last survey.

⬆️ ⬇️ Up or down indicates a trend of positive or negative changes that took place but were not sufficient to result in change in political rights or civil rights.

NOTE: - The rating reflect global events from January 1, 2010, through December 31, 2010

Source: www.freedomhouse.org

An evaluation of Danish support to the media worldwide includes, a mention of support to Bhutan's policy of establishing an independent media. The report describes the corporatisation of BBS and *Kuensel*. The intention of removing these media from the government's sphere of control was clearly to promote independent and professional journalism. However, taking the unstable political situation in the country into consideration, there are certain limitations to the way the press functions. Although a free and open political debate is still not assured, an increased professional standard is obvious.

The challenge for the media is to continue to liberate itself, from the government and to become truly professional and independent in their reporting. Media institutions must encourage public dialogue and participation as part of the democratisation process of the country.

According to I.P Adhikari (President of AFPA-Bhutan), with the pace Bhutan's democracy is running seems like a snail. It is rather a guided democracy, where people are entitled to talk their rights and responsibility but only after seeking permission from authority, at least not directly. It seems like Bhutan as the barren land for the press freedom, a democracy where media house get fined for holding a discussion criticizing minister. Additionally our concern is towards budding media industry, facing pressure from money makers to talk for their benefits, not for the general benefit, Like in the case of *Bhutan Times*³⁰.

Nation starts getting two daily newspapers but sustainability has been in question, owing to small readership and advertisement marketing. The marketing is likely to go unfavourable, until government does not withdraw its regulation. However, organisations, agency, or individuals are not entitled to invest more than two percent of their income in to advertisement. This is indirect blow for killing media industry. Interesting to note that, the elected government has not opened its formal office to communicate with media, which helps to strengthen democracy but royal place has come forward for making itself close to media³¹.

³⁰ I.P Adhikari (2009), *Barren land of press freedom* , Annual Report of Press Freedom in Bhutan, p1

³¹ *Ibid*, p1

It is clear from the above discussion that, since last five year, lots of changes has been coming out in the print media of Bhutan; either it is accessibility, nature and behaviour, credibility, or its freedom status. It is so, because in a democratic country the responsibility of media towards government and society bound to be increase. In other words media act as a fourth pillar of the democracy that is what media in Bhutan trying to achieve. In terms of Bhutan progress in the ranking of freedom status, it has done a good job but these changes are still not enough for the society, which is now more aware of media role in strengthening democracy. Some society, including pro democratic people in Bhutan, still believe that media is under the control of government. Some media organisations i.e AFPA, continuously raising voice for free and fare media in Bhutan. Print media dependency over government funding is one of the major obstacles in functioning of print media, independently as well with integrity in Bhutan. Hence with changing time print media in Bhutan has a long way to go.

CHAPTER 4

INFLUENCE OF MEDIA ON BHUTANESE SOCIETY AND CULTURE

Bhutan is going through significant political, economic, and social developments. With the coming of democracy and elections in 2008, the impact of media on Bhutanese society has rather increased now. Print media is playing important role in decision making as well as directing diplomacy, while electronic media has influenced the society and culture of Bhutan. Media is now educating the civil society and influencing their thinking and ideas. The print media have become lively and engage the literate people. They continue to influence the policy makers. Moreover the TV has becomes more powerful in accelerating the adoption of new ideas and extending in to the rural areas. For the first time, a generation of Bhutanese children is growing up with TV in home. In spite of all these some section of society are very critical about the new media and says that, it is diluting the unique culture of Bhutan which is a important constituent of GNH concept, while other think that with the help of this new media, culture and society is being recognising to the other parts of the world.

However, new challenges are ahead and how to cope up with these challenges is going to be a difficult task for media in Bhutan. In most countries, the mass media has moved away from the positive expectations of civil society. Global competition and the profit motive have made the media forget its social responsibility. Instead, it is busy to transforming citizens into spectators, by offering them entertainment in the name of knowledge and communication. A major challenge for media in Bhutan will be “how to get the people out this whirlpool of consumerism?”¹ What role will the media have in making the people at large rise from their individual self to the spiritual level of responsible citizenship? To what extent will the media in Bhutan be limited by neutrality, impartiality, security, and ambiguity? .

¹ Balasubramanian, N and Nidiup, Jigme (2007). “Role of media in changing socio-political situation in Bhutan”. *Media and Public Culture, Proceeding of the Second International Seminar on Bhutanese Studies*, Thimpu, p334

***Kuensel* Daily Newspaper: Changing Trends, Between 2006 -2010**

As mentioned earlier, *Kuensel* newspaper is the oldest and the largest circulated national newspaper in Bhutan, becomes a full-fledged newspaper in June 1986². *Kuensel* today has the highest circulation of about 10,500 copies daily. It functioned with about 12 reporters on the English desk and about five on the *Dzongkha* desk. *Kuensel* was also widely trusted for news and was the most read newspaper in Bhutan.

The country historically transitioned to democracy in March 2008. As such, articles were analysed from the two years before democracy; 2006 and 2007, during the transition in 2008 and two years after the establishment; 2009 and 2010. To maintain uniformity, January month was selected from all the five years.

Bhutanese media has always mirrored the country's journey through time³. Therefore, nothing can be more illuminating than, examining the contents of its oldest newspaper, *Kuensel* in order to understand the changes brought to media's role and freedom with the coming of constitutional democratic form of government in 2008.

News contents of *Kuensel's* January issues of the last five years (2006-2010) was analysed, paying attention to major government related issues covered during the months. Sources used, headlines, the tone of the story, and the way stories were approached were considered. However, it should be noted that, the findings reveal the character of the print media and need not apply to the television and radio broadcast which functions under a comparatively closer supervision. More than 100 stories were studied from the identified months to determine the changes in the role and freedom of media.

² Wangchuk, Dorji (2007), "Media in the New Political Order, Proceedings of Seminar on Media and Public Culture". *Centre for Bhutan Studies*, Thimpu, p278

³ Dorji, Kinley and Siok, Sian Pek (2007), "The Bhutanese Media: In the Service of the Public in Rethinking Development", *Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Gross National Happiness*, Center for Bhutan Studies, Thimpu, p7

Major Findings:

Although on a very small and random basis, the content analysis has traced the way media evolved, and its role within the last five years. It shown a visible shift in the function of media, like the new watch-dog role unlike before and the new boldness and freedom it enjoy now.

Before the transition, it was found that media was taking an active participation in the nation's development process. Its contents was mainly dominated by government related stories and social issues. As the political scenario was about to enter in to the transition phase, then it joined hands with the nation to prepare and educate people about parliamentary elections and democracy. As we observed, March 2008 was a big time for the print media, because in that time newspapers were frequently published the political and other related stories. It started publishing public opinion about current political situation as well as its future. As a result, suddenly media had taken up an indispensable role, in closely monitoring the moves of the political parties and the candidates. It also initiated discussions and engaged people in discourses. More or less, this shift to democracy had undoubtedly empowered media. It was earlier noticed that sensitive issues were now tackled actively by print media. But now it began disclosing corrupt practices of individuals and organisations. It also started scrutinising government's plans and policies, and keeping track of political moves. Stories were printed with bold headlines and credible sources, including the high level officials. Similarly media was also seen fighting for its own independence and rights to information.

January 2006: This was the time when nation had begun preparations for the political transition. His majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuk (The Fourth King) has done the appointment of the chief election commissioner, the chairperson of the anti-corruption commission and the auditor general were the topic in the issues of this month. There were also articles on the establishment of the election commission office and the agendas set by the anti corruption commission. Another big story was the Fifth King's, who was then the Crown Prince, consultation with the people in different districts on the draft Constitution of Bhutan.

It is obvious that, news media had cloaked its public service role and joined the nation, in preparing for the emerging political system. Media was recording the significant developments taking place, as the nation geared for democracy. Most important, it was informing and educating people about the new system. However, it was a difficult task for the media to educate people about democracy, where society was deeply associated with monarchy system of government. The stories were approached in a very objective manner, maintaining a very formal tone and sticking to press releases and a few interviews. For example, a story on the appointment of new judges to the High Court started as:

Taking yet another step in the historic process towards a democratic Constitutional monarchy, His Majesty the King appointed, on the recommendation of the National Judicial Commission, five Drangpons (judges) to the High Court on January 24⁴.

But this did not mean media overlooked other social and developmental issues. Stories like the progress of the foreign direct investment (FDI) policy and the safety standards of construction companies were carried out with thorough interviews and researches. The stories and editorials also questioned authorities for not reacting to the need of the time. For example, an editorial titled “All bark, no bite?”⁵ indicates about the authority having not a proper solution in place during a series of rabies outbreak in places.

January 2007: One year later and cases investigated by the anti corruption commission and their moves to prevent it, were some of the major stories of the month. With the help of such democratic institutions, media was seen putting up a brave front to disclose sensitive issues. In a way, such democratic institutions have enabled media to adopt investigative approaches unlike before.

In the political front, media understood full responsibility in keeping track over the parliamentary election and democracy. The month reported on the finalisation of the

⁴ Wangchuk, Rinzin (2006), “five judges appointed to the high court”, *Kuensel*, 25 January 2006.

⁵For details see, www.kuenselonline.com/2010modules.php?name=news&article=6485

draft Constitution of Bhutan, announcement on the registration of political parties and the confirmation of National Council (upper house) election date. It is evident that media worked hand in hand with the election commission in educating people about the changes.

The elections to the National Council (Upper House) were the important issue at that time. Several articles published their opinion about national council election in which, some were critical about democracy, pointing towards bad effect of it on Bhutan. The exact date of elections to the Council, will be announced at a later date as per the laws said chief election commissioner, Dasho Kunzang Wangdi. The National Council, which is the upper house in other parliaments, will have 25 members. Twenty members elected by people, one from each of the twenty dzongkhags, and five eminent members nominated by the Druk Gyalpo (The King)⁶.

An interesting development noticed was the engagement of people in discussions being held on the political changes, the role media was mandated to play in a democratic setup. Even as people ready for the first parliamentary elections, there is a general apprehension that, a political party taking monetary assistance from registered members. Some articles termed as bribe which could lead to rich hand rule. The draft rule on formation of Political parties says that, a party can receive money or assistance from its registered members only. An emigrant working in Thimphu says that, the rule could put a party in danger. "The rule makes it easier for the rich," he says. "All they have to do is become a member of a party, they need not hold portfolio, but their money will control the party."⁷

It is evident that Bhutanese media then had realised and played essential role, which were expected to play in the process. Media was expected to educate people about the political shifts, which was new to Bhutan while at the same time, they ensured that people were involved in the discourses to make informed decisions.

⁶ Penjore, Ugyen, (2007), "political parties can register by July", *Kuensel*, 18 January 2007

⁷ For details see, www.Kuenselonline.com/2010modules.php?name=news&article=6487

January 2008: The month was full of activities. *Kuensel* covered its first, National Council election across the country that elected candidates from the 20 districts to represent the upper house of the parliament. Events were recorded, candidates were scrutinised and followed, and election results were analysed. Stories and editorials reflected on the election experiences. An editorial titled “A people’s election”⁸ provided an overall picture of the first nation-wide election and the numerous elements involved. With the entire world watching and listening this week, Bhutan took the first step in a vital political transition. In a process like democracy the journey is as important as the destination. Some stories were titled a “We are on our way”

The month also saw one of the biggest news in its history; the declaration of the National Assembly election date. It read: BREAKING NEWS - January 17, 2008 - Bhutan’s first general elections that will elect 47 candidates to the National Assembly will be held on March 24, the Election Commission of Bhutan announced this morning then followed by a series of election related articles. Two political parties submitted their manifestos to ECB, rules for the television debates of the candidates were announced. The seating arrangements in the National Assembly hall after the election were also declared. There were other selling stories on the impact of party politics in local governance, about the affairs occurring between the two parties and election commission. It shows that how critical print media was in his nascent phase. It was as if Bhutanese journalists had a handful to write all of a sudden.

Political stories were new to Bhutanese society and it was happening everywhere. The way issues were handled and portrayed it demonstrated as media attained sudden courage. It was also clear that people were developing some sense of media received cooperation from people in terms of information access unlike before.

January 2009: Less than a year after democracy set in and media is seen playing a dynamic role. Articles on the discussions in the parliament dominated the month. Articles were clearly displaying the watch-dog role media embraced. It highlighted

⁸For details see, <http://www.Kuenselonline.com/2010/modules.php?name=news and file=article=9648>

the steps taken by the ruling government, focused on the contradicting points raised by the opposing parties and analysed the resolutions of the assembly. The article “Locked horns over earmarked funds”⁹ is one such example.

In another titled article “*The National Council and Assembly are at odds over constituency development grants*”¹⁰ January 10, 2009 - Members of the National Council, on Thursday, tried to close all doors to the possibility of approving the much-debated constituency development grant (CDG), calling it unconstitutional, faulty, and ambiguous.

Media continued to writing about the prime minister and the government. It recorded the prime minister’s views on the progress of democracy and the political parties, the investment of constituency development grant (CDG), among others. Stories and editorials also offered analysis on the criticism, suffered by the government for hiring a global consultancy firm, McKinsey, to accelerate socio-economic growth of the country.

The month also saw media describing differences between the government and the tour operators regarding the revision of tariff system. All these are evidence enough to conclude that Bhutanese print media today is playing a very credible role in a democracy. If not more, it is on its way to win its independence, gain people’s trust and become the Fourth Estate of democracy. Council members, like in the first parliament session, spoke in unity, objecting to the proposal, unanimously voted against it and decided to appeal to His Majesty the King for guidance.

CDG (Constituency development grant) was a proposal of the National Assembly (NA) to grant an annual budget of Nu 2 million for each assembly MP to carry out developmental work in their constituencies. In the last session, the NC, after objecting, asked for more details before any decision was made¹¹.

⁹ For details see, <http://Kuenselonline.com/2010/modules.php?name=news&file=article=11790>

¹⁰ For details see, <http://Kuenselonline.com/2010/modules.php?name=news&file=article=11867>

¹¹ Lamsang, Tenzing (2009), “NC pulls up political appointees”, *Kuensel*, 12 January 2009

Stories on the revision of salary for the civil servants and numerous others, follow-ups on reveal the investigative stance media adopted over the time. The watchfulness of media delivered timely information to people on the proposals and differences, before the salary scheme was finalised. The month also carried articles that were significant in the sense; it portrayed the maturity of media and its raise voice for freedom. “The right to expression” is an example of how media had begun to fend for its independence in the new political context.

The Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS) has been fined for doing its job. The government by allowing the Bhutan InfoComm and Media Authority (BICMA) to display such authoritative powers over BBS is undermining the Constitution. It violates free press and free speech¹². Such stories defined the parameters media had begun to explore in the interest of democracy. This was a very healthy indication for media which was sending out messages to the need for independence. This also indicated the aspirations of Bhutanese society, to take media to a new level of freedom with an objective to ensure success of democracy.

January 2010: Early this year, Bhutanese media had continued to perform its watchdog role. Somehow, the tone of the articles suggested noticeable confidence and gives indication that, media was at ease with the investigative roles they have played. The month saw, unfold of corruption issues and flaws in the system prevailing within the health ministry of the country. Such attempts could have been unimaginable some years ago. It revealed the frequent trips made by the health officials for trainings and seminars that were irrelevant to them.

This is how the story was approached:

Civil servants often say that, health personnel become sick from Bhutan, is very likely when they travels out of the country. At least 30 health officials travel out of the country in a month, which is one health official going out every day. But the issue, according to health workers in the Dzongkahgs, is that a majority travelling outside

¹²For details see, <http://Kuenselonline.com/2010/modules.php?name=news and file=article=13743>

are those at the headquarters and not people in the field for seminars, workshops and conferences for whom, it may be more relevant¹³

Influence of Media on Bhutanese Society and Culture

Decision Making

According to an author Sanjeev Mehta who has done empirical study over *Kuensel* role in fostering democracy “says that, for any effective democratic process it is essential that the media not only generate awareness amongst the public on critical and relevant public issues, but also create pressure on the government to enact desirable changes. This helps to bridge the communication gap between the rulers and the ruled especially when, the majority of population does not take up the issue directly”¹⁴. There is no objective evidence to evaluate the role of *Kuensel* in inducing discussions amongst political leaders, in the national assembly and influencing their decisions. He has attempted to measure this from what the *Kuensel* readers think about it.

Out of 141 samples, 98(69.5%) were male and 43(30.5%) were female. Gender wise distribution of samples is not based on their respective weight in the population.

According to their survey, only 18.5% of the respondents conveyed that they participate in the discussions and 81.5% respondents never participated in any of the discussions. This shows that, there is a lack of culture of public discussions. This can be seen as a failure on the part of *Kuensel* to promote greater spread of public debate on the relevant issues. The other side of it is brighter in the sense that 19 of the 26 (73%) respondents who participated in any discussion on the issues raised by *Kuensel* believed that these discussions were based on better informed opinions. Table (4.1) provides the analysis of the extent to which, reporting in *Kuensel* affected reader’s judgment on any issue. More than half of the respondents (52.5%) expressed that, their judgment on any issue after reading news reporting in *Kuensel* did not change or they do not remember it. Only 14% respondents agreed that, their judgment on any

¹³ Pelden, Sonam (2010). “Suspended health officials reinstated”, *Kuensel*, 23 January 2010

¹⁴ Mehta, Sanjeev, (2006). “Role of *Kuensel* in Fostering Democracy in Bhutan”, *Proceedings of Seminar on Media and Public Culture, Centre for Bhutan Studies, Thimpu*, p311

issue changed very often after reading reporting in *Kuensel*, while 33% respondents expressed that, it happened only sometimes. It is interesting to note that 62.8% of the female respondents expressed that, their judgment on any issue never changed from the reporting in *Kuensel* as compared to only 48% of the male respondents. Similarly, only 7% female respondents told that, their judgment has changed very often after reading reporting in the *Kuensel*, as compared to 17.3% of the male respondents.

Table 4.1: Does *Kuensel* reporting affect reader's judgment?

| | Male | Female | Total |
|------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Yes , very often | 17(17.3%) | 3(7%) | 20(14.2) |
| Only sometimes | 34(34.7%) | 13(30.2%) | 47(33.3) |
| Never /do not remember | 47(48%) | 27(62.8%) | 74(52.5%) |
| Total | 98 | 43 | 141 |

Source: Sanjeev Mehta, (2006). *Role of Kuensel in fostering democracy*

Similarly 56% of the respondents felt that news reporting or editorial in *Kuensel* create pressure on the political leaders for discussion and decision on the governance and social issues.

Table 4.2: Does *Kuensel* influence political decision and debate?

| | No. Of respondents | Percentage (%) |
|-------|--------------------|----------------|
| Yes | 79 | 56 |
| No | 62 | 44 |
| Total | 141 | 100 |

Source: Sanjeev Mehta, (2006). *Role of Kuensel in fostering democracy*

Through this evidence, he point out that *Kuensel* needs to put more emphasis on issues like promoting public debate and acting as a watchdog of the government, to consolidate its role as an institution that strengthens the roots of democracy. This can be done by improving the editorials in order to provide critical understanding of the issues to its readers. In the absence of better knowledge about the relevant issues, people are not able to debate on the relevant public issues on a larger scale. Persistent arguments are an important part of public life in democracy. Public debate provides the citizens constant opportunity to participate in the public decision making process. To make such public discussion more effective, the media will have to play a very powerful role as a disseminator of the relevant information on public policies.

Another scholar Tshering Dorji in his article *Attitude towards Mass Media and its role in promoting Environmental Consciousness: An Empirical Investigation* has tried to analyse the influence of print media on decision making, while comparing with electronic media. Influence of the *Kuensel*, BBS-radio, and BBS-television on the respondents 'decision-making process was examined by finding the number of times the respondents take a decision by what they read, see, or hear from various media. The results are summarized in the Table (4.3)

Table4.3: Influence of media on decision making process (number of respondents 184).

| | <i>Kuensel</i> | BBS-radio | BBS- Television |
|--------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Frequency | Percentage (%) | Percentage (%) | Percentage (%) |
| All the time | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Often | 7 | 4 | 8 |
| Sometimes | 55 | 48 | 44 |
| Never | 36 | 46 | 47 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Source: Tshering Dorji,(2007), *Attitude towards Mass Media and its role in promoting Environmental Consciousness: An Empirical Investigation*

Table 4.4: Influence of media on decision making according to gender (number of males: 128 numbers of females: 56).

| Frequency | <i>Kuensel</i> (%) | | BBS-radio (%) | | BBS-Television (%) | |
|--------------|--------------------|--------|---------------|--------|--------------------|--------|
| | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| All the time | 3 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Often | 6 | 9 | 6 | 0 | 7 | 11 |
| Sometimes | 57 | 48 | 50 | 43 | 43 | 46 |
| Never | 34 | 43 | 52 | 55 | 49 | 43 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Source: Tshering Dorji,(2007), *Attitude towards Mass Media and its role in promoting Environmental Consciousness: An Empirical Investigation.*

While focusing on both tables, it seems that the impact of *Kuensel* on the respondents' decision-making, appears to be greater compared to BBS-radio and BBS-television, because only a few respondents were not affected by it in their decision making. The majority of the respondents were affected only sometimes by each of the media. Comparatively, the number of respondents affected only sometimes by *Kuensel* was more than the number of respondents being affected by BBS-radio and BBS-television. The number of respondents not affected at all by BBS-radio and BBS-television is more or less equal to the number affected sometimes by the same. Even though the number of respondents often affected by various media is relatively less, the number of respondents often affected by *Kuensel* and by BBS-television is almost double the number often affected by BBS-radio. This suggests that most of the time, *Kuensel* and BBS-television had influenced a greater number of people.

Environmental Education

Preservation of environment in Bhutan is another important component of GNH. Therefore, it is essential for the government of Bhutan to keep balance between urbanisation and preservation of environment. Here role of media becomes important, where it can educate the people about environment and their importance. In an editorial “*No environment monitoring at road works in Zhemgang*”¹⁵ Tashi Dema says that, due to the widening of 1.2 km Reutala road in Zhemgang, waste creating pollution over there. Lack of proper arrangement for disposing the waste to safer areas, is a major concern. Similarly Dipika Chhetri, has also written an article saying, Opening Mountains for climbers or lakes for swimmers would have left our mountains, lakes and forests in a similar state as Mt Everest, which is groaning under the weight of discarded oxygen tanks and heaps of litter¹⁶. However, the Ministry of Economic Affairs’ programme called Cleaner Technology and Environmental Management (CTEM), supported by the Norwegian government, aims to make industries more environmentally sustainable and friendly by saving unnecessary waste.

In an article titled “*Give up meat, save the environment*”¹⁷ explain that, if the pig rearing is vanishing from the village, why the livestock officers are inclined on encouraging such profession. He denies the view that, not rearing pigs causes heavy economic losses to the farmers. Meat is not a natural food but a flesh of a dead animal. It takes 16 kg of grain to produce just one 1 kg of meat. In developing countries, it takes 7,000 litres of water to produce 100 gram of meat while it takes only 550 gm of water to produce flour for making sufficient bread for food.

In an article *The cost of modernisation* states that, with the mushrooming of more buildings and infrastructures, our towns are becoming greyer and dustier by the year.

¹⁵ Dema, Tashi (2010), “No environment monitoring at road works in Zhemgang”, *Kuensel* 28 January 2010

¹⁶ For details see, <http://www.Kuenselonline.com/moudules.php?name=article=15477>

¹⁷ For details see, www.bhutanobserver.bt/give-up-meat-save-enviornment/

Green areas and recreation parks are either lost or there are few. As a result, a breath of fresh air on the lap of nature is literally far into the surrounding forests. Birds have already left the town for good. Snow hasn't come back this year¹⁸. These all together shows that print media in Bhutan is conscious and makes the society aware of environment and their preservation.

Print Media and Anti Tobacco Campaign

Bhutan's anti-tobacco enthusiasm goes back to December 2004 when it became the first nation in the world to ban the sale of tobacco. Two months later, smoking was banned in public places like pubs and restaurants. The law was not exactly the ruling of the government; it was proposed and passed by Bhutan's former unicameral parliament, a body in which, under the monarchy, ministers and people's representatives from across the country met twice a year to discuss progress and issues affecting Bhutan¹⁹.

Bhutan has recently put the world's strictest anti-tobacco legislation into action. Passed in June 2010 and implemented in January, the new law forbids the sale or smuggling of tobacco into Bhutan, and hands out jail sentences of up to three years to anyone caught smoking in a restricted area such as a bank. In both the cases, there is no chance of being granted bail²⁰.

A monk Sonam Tshering, in Bhutan has become the first person to be punished under the anti-smoking law. He was caught in January 2011, carrying 48 packets of chewing tobacco (worth \$ 2.50), which he had bought in India before travelling back home to the Himalayan kingdom. Writing in the *Kuensel* daily newspaper, Jigmi Y Thinley said, he felt sorry for the 23-year-old convict, and hinted that the legislation

¹⁸ For details see, www.bhutanobserver.bt/the-cost-of-modernisation/August/2009

¹⁹ For details see, website of *Ministry of Health, Bhutan* /archive.

²⁰ Wangdi, Kench (2011), "Do Bhutan's anti-smoking laws go too far", *Time World*, 12 April 2011.

might be reviewed²¹

The Ministry of Health takes the responsibility of educating the people on the harms of tobacco use. Print and broadcast media has been used to inform people about hazards of tobacco use. Advertising of tobacco products on all national media has been banned since 1995, along with ban on the sale of tobacco products through the country with effect from 17 December 2004²². However, cross-border advertising through international television and radio channels, cinema and the print media does takes place, according to government survey report *Tobacco control in Bhutan 2010*²³. This report reveals that, nearly two in ten males and nearly one in ten females currently smoked cigarettes.

Bhutan tourism industry was privatized in 1991, to promote culturally and environmentally sustainable tourism. No independent tourism is allowed in Bhutan. It means that, all tourists must be pre arranged through an all exclusive tour company. The government sets a minimum price which called tourist tariff. The ministry of agriculture and the tourism council of Bhutan signed a memorandum of understanding to open protected areas for tourists. The idea to diversify tourism ensures that local community derives the benefit of the industry that generates the second highest income for the government, after hydropower²⁴.

Tourism council of Bhutan is an authoritative body to formulate policy towards tourism. It generally promotes tourism through media. Visual as well as print media help to support tourism in Bhutan. .According to the council report, the online credit card system is expected to be functional by April 2011. We expect this move to make a significant impact since Bhutan till date did not have a credit card system.

²¹ Thinly, Y. Jigme (2011), "Bhutan Warns Against Anti- Tobacco Law", *Himalayan Times.*, 7 March 2011

²² Based on the resolution ma-7 of the 82nd national assembly of Bhutan.

²³ RGOB, (2010), Ministry of Health., *Brief control tobacco control in Bhutan*, p6

²⁴ Dorji, Passang (2010), "Trickle down effect", *Kuensel*, 4 August 2010

Media in Bhutan has very much influenced by the modernisation and globalisation. It has helped to accelerate a new culture by introducing ideas of the modern and western world. Compared with MIS 2003, when the global channels ranked at the top and there were few radio channels and newspapers, today's media has more developed in number as well as content. This growth of new media in Bhutan has also led to accept new culture.

Language

The use of *Dzonglis* (*Dzongkha* and English mixed) on radio and in music is an indication of the mash-up of the 21st century²⁵. This shows that, Bhutanese languages have also become the victim of foreign media. The youth were learning more Hindi and English. *Dzongkha* was being increasingly sidelined with more youth believing that, speaking English provides more confidence and gave them an air of superiority. The switch to foreign languages is most observable during parties²⁶.

Gopilal Acharya an editorial writer gives an example "when we meet we want to speak English because, we have become ashamed of speaking *Dzongkha*," one youth interviewed by the study group. "We have a concept that those who don't speak English are conservative, old fashioned and orthodox people. Even among ourselves we are not very comfortable speaking total *Dzongkha*."²⁷ This clearly shows the how thinking of youths in Bhutan is changing regarding their national language.

The new radio stations have bought a whole new style of entertainment including the emergence of Radio Jockey with a fast talking style. The FM station and their focus on entertainment have led to a growth in popularity of *Rigasar Music, Western hip hop, and techno music*. Some focused group discussants said that, since the Kuzoo²⁸ FM came on they have not bought any music cassettes²⁹.

²⁵ RGOB (2008), *Media Impact Study*, p52

²⁶ Acharya, Gopilal.,(2004), "Five years of cable television", *Kuensel* ., 19 October 2004

²⁷ Acharya, Gopilal, (2004), "Five years of cable television", *Kuensel* ., 19 October 2004

²⁸ It is a new radio FM, launched in Bhutan.

²⁹ RGOB (2008), *Media Impact Study*, p52

In many regions in Paro and Thimphu the traditional practice of ploughing land has been increasingly swapped with power tiller, which might cause the loss of many Dzongkha Lexemes such as: *khami*, *Ngashi*, *Thoop*, *Shé*, *Ngadu*, *Docri*, *Pceshi*, *Pcetha*, *khakú*, etc³⁰.

Figure 4.1 A Traditional plough



Fig. 4.2 Power Tiller (Cureen: tradition)



Fig.4.3 Traditional, *Sang*

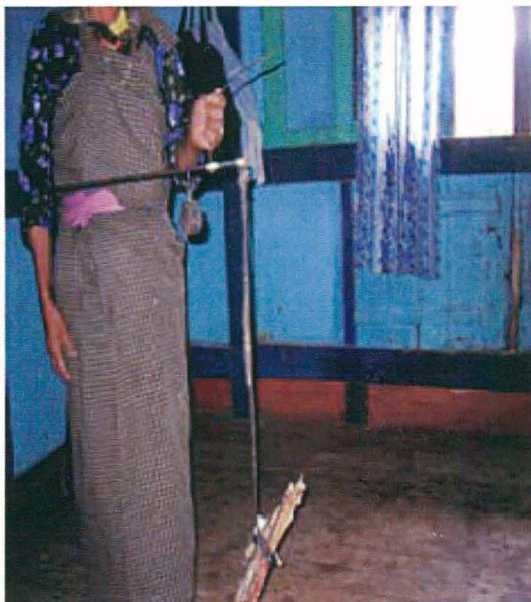


Fig.4.4 Current *Kg*



Source:- Dorjee, Kinley (2006), “*Cultural Imperialism and Linguistic Change: Impact of Cultural Imperialism on Dzongkha Borrowing.*”

³⁰ Dorjee Kinley (2006), “Cultural Imperialism and Linguistic Change: Impact of Cultural Imperialism on Dzongkha Borrowing”, *proceedings of Seminar on media and public culture, Centre for Bhutan studies, Thimpu*, p124

Unlike the ploughing practice, a borrowing of a foreign practice like this has brought about minute change in Dzongkha; *sang* is old-fashioned now, and it is replaced with the foreign word *kg*, thus the locution *maar sang chi* has come to *maar kg chi* (a kilogram of butter)³¹.

Dress

Of all the media, visual media have the most influence on people's dressing in Bhutan. With 16.9% saying that Bhutanese TV influenced them strongly and 22.2% saying they were influenced a little. In comparison, 13.8% said that Indian TV influenced them strongly and 15.6% said they were uninfluenced a little³². It is all about looking good or looking like film stars which mainly a foreign influence.

The MIS 2008 report asserts that TV has undeniably influencing the values of urban population importing influences from the outside world. TV has changed social behavior as well as broadened the minds and attitudes of society. Most popular channels in Bhutanese homes are from Rupert Murdoch's Star network like the Star TV, Zee TV and Sony TV packages broadcast from India. This resulted in Bhutanese viewers becoming more familiar with the lives of middle class society in India. Global statistics shows that the Star network reaches more than 300 million people across Asia and the Middle East³³.

School children frequently choose to wear Jeans and T-shirts in spite of their national dress *gho* (for male), *kira* (for female). Even in their cultural programme student like to wear something different than their national dress. It seems that they are trying to copy with film stars.

³¹ Ibid., p124

³² RGOB, (2008). *Media Impact Study* .. p53

³³ Acharya, Gopilal, (2004), *Five years of cable television, Kuensel* .., 19/10/2004

Fig. 4.5 Traditional Dance



Fig. 4.6 Current Tradition



Fig.4.7 Hip hop practice

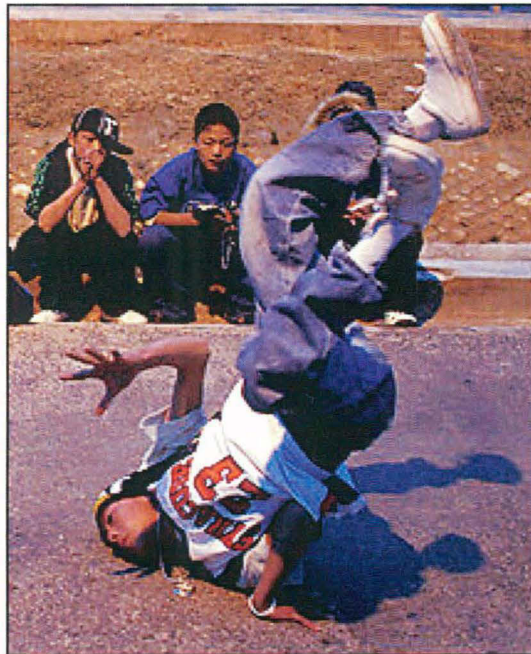
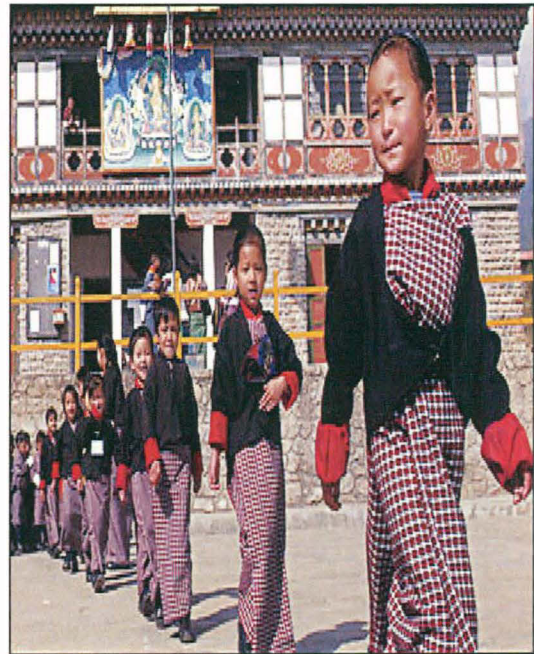


Fig.4.8 Traditional Dress



Source:-www.washingtonpost.com/wp.dyn/content/article/2008/04/03/AR2008040303869

Social Behavior

Like in other South Asian country, the globalised visual media has also changed the social behaviour in Bhutan. However, this impact is limited to the urban population. People have adjusted their life style around the TV. People are looking hungry for entertainment particularly in the districts.³⁴ Most negative impact of this globalised visual media affects the youth. A country like Bhutan which is famous for their unique culture and society, is marching towards dilution of culture. Several educationists and parents felt that the media fuelled some level of aggressive behaviour among the young. “In the 1980s and 1990s, we never had such aggression in our young people. But now they are picking up this aggressive behaviour.³⁵” According to the MIS 2008 an interesting finding comes out that watching Indian TV consume lot of time. Even it affected their time of work, prayer and offerings.

Now days, the social bond between the family members is somehow detereioting. For entertainment people has become more independent on TV and Radios. As a result an old tradition of listening story from grandmother or singing song for crying child has become invisible. In MIS 2008 report, it clearly mentions that percentage of viewing TV by children is more than other members of households. Apart from children, mediation practitioners are also influenced by visual media. While watching TV it must be difficult for mediation practitioners who usually count their prayer beads, to fully concentrate over worshipping.

The role of journalism has changed through history in rapidly changing environment. Through the analysis of news paper editorial 2006 to 2010 it becomes clear that Print media in Bhutan has moving on right track. It not only directing the diplomacy now days but playing important role in political development.

Bhutan is known for their unique culture and tradition. It is the media, which draw the attention of society and government towards environment conservation. Media is

³⁴ RGOB (2008), *Media Impact Study.*, p58

³⁵ RGOB, (2008), *Media Impact Study.*, p59

channel through which government promotes tourism, is the backbone of economic system of Bhutan.

Due to the difference in distribution and consumption, the impact of media differs between rural and urban areas. Since villagers are mostly illiterate, radio is the only medium through which they are being informed, both about the nation and the world at large. In particular, through radio they learn about government policies and development activities taking place around the country. However, despite the availability of many stations via radio, most Bhutanese only listen to BBS radio due to the language barrier. Therefore, the variety of news, programmes and entertainment are limited and hence the impact of media is also limited in the rural areas.

However, its impact in urban centres is both positive and negative. It has made possible for urban residents to have access to different sources of news and entertainment. It has also made possible for people to express opinions and participate in public discourse. The television has further enabled people to see beyond their traditional borders, peoples and culture of the world. On the one hand it has broadened their perceptions and ideas on the other; it has encouraged adoption of western lifestyles.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Media in Bhutan has changed through history in rapidly changing environment. It will continue to be an important player in national development. Print media in Bhutan has shown some significant changes in short span of time, which gives a kind of insurance for a bigger change. With time, it will become more important for Bhutanese society. Print media is in its growing phase, it needs support from the policy maker as well as encouragement from civil society in Bhutan.

In drawing up suggestions for the growing media in Bhutan, on the basis that it must adopt a public service mandate. This will help in outlining some broad needs which is required for the Bhutanese media in a new age of information. This will also provide a foundation for future research and policy consideration.

Growth and Development of Print Media in Bhutan.

The growth of Bhutanese print media has been rapid since last five years. It was the time before 2006, where country had single newspaper acting as voice of government. Coming of private ownership in print media and liberal policy adopted by the government, marked the new era for media in Bhutan. Moreover, there is need of some more legislation in support of media as well as determination from the government, to provide as such freedom to media to become a fourth pillar of democracy.

- Media literacy programmes need to be introduced for the younger generation, the public, and the government to promote greater public participation in defining the parameters and guidelines for media to develop.

- Ethical and professional code of conduct that has been drafted should be made transparent because some media organisations and civil society always question its objectivity.
- BICMA, the regulatory body should involve more people outside of government in its work, to make more effective and to encourage public participation. This will reduce the assumption of civil society which looks it as a censorship body.
- Legislation in support of media should be more rational and transparent. It should be amendment according to the demand of time.
- Media ownership in Bhutan must be distributed region-wise to avoid monopolies. Ownership must also reflect the pluralism of a democratic society.
- Subsidy: As a landlocked country Bhutan will be faced with the high costs of media production. The print media should require subsidy in a variety of forms, from direct budgetary grants to indirect input like infrastructure, advertising, and reduced taxation. The government has invested in the information sector but such investments need to extend to all areas of the media, including print, equipment and training of professionals.
- Funding should not be only a state responsibility. Bhutan can draw from the experience of other countries and look at a range of source including license fees, advertising and sponsors, the sale of commercial products etc.
- Bhutan should register the journalist's association of Bhutan to function as a professional group to raise and maintain professional standards in media industry.

Print Media and Bhutanese Civil Society

Access to media is an important aspect of good governance. There is a vast gap between those who knows (particularly of government policy and thinking) and the public, who are often not informed of policies and trends. Urban areas continue to enjoy more access to media and media coverage. This inequality should be removed. As we know that participation of people is the essence of democracy, so peoples should be more engaged in system through media. Media should be free and fare and must have rights of speech to do the justice towards civil society.

- The government, through policy and regulations must ensure balanced availability throughout the country to prevent a concentration of media only in capital and larger towns.
- Media access and information infrastructure needs to be central to development planning in Bhutan. It should be not just to overcome the country's geographical barriers, but as an active player government have to play for the effective changes.
- Regulatory authority should be cautious about the content of newspapers. It is inevitable that coming of private ownership, competition among media industry will rise which could led to the print media deviate from their primary focus, just for their survival.
- Dzongkha edition of newspaper is seen as being not commercially profitable. So print media reluctant to produce english edition. Hence there is a need to look at incentive to encourage Dzogkha edition as a national priority.
- The media needs to portray more rural problems, rural views and challenges of Lhotsampa refugee as well. There is a tendency to cover more Thimphu oriented developments which have the indirect impact of neglecting events and people in other districts.
- Gender policies must encourage women to join the media as professionals.

Impact of Media over Bhutanese Society and Culture

Despite the legal independence, print media continue to find government stories difficult to report. Still bureaucracy is the most difficult to get information according to media persons. This shows that, government has still lacking confidence over media. Similarly there are lots of obstacles in the way of growing print media in Bhutan. Moreover the electronic media in Bhutan has very much influenced by the global media in a short time. Now it is time for policy maker to adopt such policy to keep balance between modernisation and culture preservation.

- The government needs to be media-friendly. It needs to contact the media more often and be more pro-active. There is a need to educate the key actors in the government (spokespersons) to speak out, and to provide valuable information in the interest of nation.
- The government needs a more active approach to protect and build its image in the international arena. This would be done through regular contact with international journalists.
- Policy must differentiate between quality news media and entertainment media. It should be the primary focus of the policy maker to support the development of quality local content in newspapers.
- There must be strict policy guidelines for both the international and local media to preserve Bhutan's unique cultural heritage.
- Government should initiate a national awards and grants for media industry for their excellence in cultural promotion.
- The media have a faster and wider reach than classroom. So Bhutan must explore the use of the media for educational purpose. It can promote activities like public health, environment, education, law, driving trips to build a GNH society.

Concluding Remarks

The concept of Gross National Happiness in Bhutan is not all about happiness. Gross National Happiness is about giving people choices so that they can make their own decision and enjoy the life in their own way. For people to make decision they need to be empowered. Empowerment means having the right information. However it is the responsibility of media to make sure that Bhutanese citizens are educated and informed.

There is an incremental change since last five year and, there will be dramatic changes in next five year. The biggest change in past five year is that, print media were a source of education and information in the past; they are now critical player in the political process of an emerging democracy. The media are not just watchdog of society, they are changing society itself. Media are constructing new realities and values and new culture.

The kind of growth and development of print media in Bhutan has visualized since last five years, it can only be said that now the trend is changing. We have already discussed that, until 2006 there was only one newspaper *Kuensel*, available in Bhutan, generally known as voice of the government. Within the span of five years, today six newspapers are available to the nation. It shows that how rapidly print media is growing. Along with socio-economic and political development, government liberal policy makes the changing happening. Now Bhutan is part of global world so it is important for government of Bhutan to follow international rules and norms. Being a part of global world Bhutan feels some sorts of pressure to implement liberal policy towards media; as a result Coming of Private ownership in newspaper and in other media becomes possible. We hope this kind of changes will take place in future also.

Looking at government support in development of print media there is no doubt that it has brought some legislation as well as regulatory authority. It has also brought constitution of Bhutan which provides fundamental rights (Article7) like, freedom of speech, right to information etc. In spite of all these things there is still

some sort of monopoly of government over policy making and decision making. Here it is important to mention that the Bhutan has adopted democracy but the behaviour and thinking of its functional executive is still monarchical. It is not pro active in bringing changes compare to other democratic countries of the world. The time will come when a new generation of Bhutanese society, having great faith in democracy will certainly change the face of Bhutan.

However, there is need of some more legislation in support of media, which actually provides safeguard to the media personal. Government's indirect control over the print media as a funding agency is haunting most. International supports are already there but most of the fund being utilized in electronic media as well as for infrastructure development, as a result print media is still lacking of fund. More or less, overall development of print media, in a very small span of time, gives a kind of assurance to the world that, being a newly democratic country; it has more opportunity to become a developed and responsible media.

As far as accessibility of newspaper is concern there is big gap in urban and rural areas. Lacks of transportation, literacy and affordability as well as language are some basic problems in distribution and consumption of media. Urbanisation is taking place with construction of building, park, and restaurant etc, but this is only urban centric. Bhutan has to develop broader infrastructures and transportation which could connect the rural areas to the main districts.

Due to the difference in distribution and consumption, the impact of media also differs between rural and urban areas. Since villagers are mostly illiterate, radio is the only medium through which they are being informed, both about the nation and the world at large. In the age of globalisation Bhutanese media has influenced by global media. But the Bhutanese media must be conscious that it functions in the environment of small society that survives on the strength of distinct cultural identity. Along with modernisation Bhutanese media must show sensitivity to their cultural and society.

Comparing with Indian media, Bhutanese media has two conflicting goals, survival goals and social goals. Here question rise that, to what extent the

Bhutanese media can balance between these two goals? It is not an easy question to answer. It depends on the nature of the media personnel themselves, their ethics, morale, social consciousness, etc. To become commercially viable is a major objective of any industry or business in a global world. Because financial viability is a basic objective of all business activities, media cannot be exempted from that goal. On the other hand, to meet the social objectives is completely different from financial goals. In a highly competitive and market oriented environment survival becomes the sole objective. This can be explained with the introduction of five more newspapers in Bhutan. Till 2006, there was only *Kuensel* in the print media and it had its own freedom and way of functioning. But now that there are five competitors, *Kuensel* had to change its style, coverage and presentation of items, etc. In the days to come, the competition will become more prominent and we will be in a better position to understand and analyse the impact of private newspapers in Bhutan.

The greatest challenge that Bhutan is facing at the moment is that average age of journalist is under 20s and they are not to mature to be effective. There is constant need to guide reporters and to build the maturity of media. Journalists are still learning about their audience. Similarly peoples are not used to dealing with media. For young and inexperienced media persons reporting in small society where people react personally and emotionally is going to be a difficult task.

We have already enlisted number of concern and challenges in this paper. However it will not be an impossible task to rationalize the role of media in free and democratic Bhutan. It is growing day by day and we hope Bhutan's media must play a very significant role in the development of Bhutan. It must place national interest and priorities before all other interest. The media must educate the population about Bhutan and the world in which Bhutan exist. Bhutanese media must explain the global economic and political issues to the people and transmit the real value of gross national happiness so that these values become a part of Bhutanese consciousness.

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APPENDIX-I

The following is an extract of the Royal Decree issued his majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuk in 1992.

Today, as the kingdom enters the age of communications, its priorities are geared to meet the needs and demands of the times. The kingdom has seen a dramatic increase in the literacy rate of the population as a result of the special attention given by the Royal Government to the education sector. As technological advancement brings the international community closer together, it has also established the infrastructure to modernize and strengthen communications and information links with the rest of the world. It is the policy of the Royal Government, therefore, to facilitate and encourage the professional growth of the Bhutanese media, which must play an important and responsible role in all areas of development. Such role is especially relevant to the national policy of decentralization, which aims to involve all sections of the Bhutanese society in the socio-economic and political development of the Kingdom. The national newspaper, Kuensel, and the Bhutan Broadcasting Service will therefore be delinked from the Ministry of Communications to give them the flexibility to grow in professionalism and to enable them to be more

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political development of the Kingdom. The national newspaper, Kuensel, and the Bhutan Broadcasting Service will therefore be delinked from the Ministry of Communications to give them the flexibility to grow in professionalism and to enable them to be more effective in fulfilling their important responsibility to society. From the fifth day of the eighth Bhutanese month (October 1, 1992) the national newspaper, Kuensel, and the Bhutan Broadcasting Service will be established as two autonomous corporations. The Kuensel and BBS Corporations will be governed by an editorial board comprising of representatives of the government, media professionals, scholars, and eminent citizens

Source:- Powdyel, S. Thakur (2006), “Media and the Maverick Mind: Need for Media Literacy: A Lay View”, *proceedings of Seminar on media and public culture, Centre for Bhutan studies, Thimpu*

APPENDIX-II

ABRIDGED VERSION ON CODE OF ETHICS FOR JOURNALISTS

Bhutan Infocomm and Media Authority

Royal Government of Bhutan

Thimphu: Bhutan

ABRIDGED VERSION ON CODE OF ETHICS FOR JOURNALISTS

1. Ethics of Journalists:

Journalists in Bhutan, as elsewhere, have a duty to maintain the highest professional and ethical standards. They shall provide independent and accurate news and information with integrity, remaining accountable for their actions, neutral in their position and keeping the national interest foremost in their minds at all times. They

shall, accordingly, conduct themselves in consonance with the following principles and observe these principles both in letter and in spirit.

2. Professional Integrity

A Journalist shall:

a. present the news with integrity and decency, avoiding real or perceived conflicts of interest, and respect the dignity and intelligence of the audience as well as the subjects of news.

3. Social Responsibility

A Journalist shall:

- a. recognize their obligation to the public and to the country;
- b. not publish any matter which offends against good taste and decency.

4. The Right to Truth

A Journalist shall:

a. pursue the truth at all times and not publish false, inaccurate, misleading or distorted material. He shall ensure that, as far as possible, every story he writes is thoroughly researched. In particular, he shall clearly distinguish between fact, comment and conjecture. Where, despite due diligence in researching a story, he publishes an inaccurate fact, he shall ensure that a correction, and a suitable apology, is published as soon as possible after the inaccuracy has been brought to his attention.

5. Non - Discrimination

A Journalist shall: a. defend the independence of all journalists from those seeking influence or control

over news content and gather and report news without fear or favor, and vigorously resist undue influence from any outside forces, including advertisers, sources, story subjects, powerful individuals, special interest groups and also political groups;

b. determine news contents solely through editorial judgment and not as a result of outside influence;

c. resist any self-interest or peer pressure that might erode journalistic duty and service to the public and to the country.

6. Sensationalism

A Journalist shall avoid sensationalism in the reporting of events and take all possible precautions to ensure that anything published by him does not have the effect of inciting people into violence or other illegal acts.

7. Protection of Sources

A journalist shall ordinarily protect the confidentiality of his sources. He may, however, reveal the identity of a source where he has obtained the consent of the source or where the law requires him to do so.

8. Respect for Privacy and Human Dignity

A journalist shall:

a. not publish anything that is defamatory of any person or organization or invade the privacy of any person without his consent and shall respect his private and family life, home, health and correspondence.

9. Recordings of Conversations

A journalist shall not harass, intimidate or trick any person to obtain, or attempt to obtain, information or pictures. In particular, he shall not install listening devices on anyone's property or tape-record conversations with anyone without their consent, or enter anyone's property surreptitiously or using a subterfuge, except in circumstances where it can clearly and objectively be demonstrated that there is an overriding public interest in doing so. The onus of demonstrating the overriding public interest shall be on the journalist.

10. Competition and Fairness

A Journalist shall:

a. adhere to the spirit of free competition in the Bhutanese media and shall not, at any time, monopolize or attempt to monopolize the market by using power, influence, authority, money or by any other means.

11. National Interest

A Journalist shall place the national interest and security above everything

Source:- Wood, Philippa (2007), *Priming the Printing Press: The Growing Print Media in Bhutan*, S.I.T, Tibetan and Himalayan Studies Spring

APPENDIX- III

Table 1.1: Information and communication indicators, Media Impact Study 2003, Bhutan

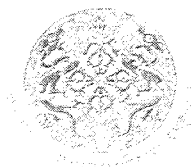
| | Number | Remarks |
|---|--|--|
| Broadcast | | |
| Radio sets | 37,000 (1997)upto 250,000 | BBS and RTM 2000 guestimates |
| FM radio sets distributed | 1,600 (2000) | BBS estimstes |
| Television | 35,000 | BBS estimstes |
| Cable TV operators | 33 | BCA estimates |
| Cable subscribers | 15000 estimstes | BCA estimates |
| Internet | | |
| Computers nationwide | About 8,000- 10,000 | DTH/BHUTAN Telecom estimates |
| Druk dial-up users | 1,900 with an estimated 5000 users | Sept 2003 figures, Druknet |
| Druknet Leased lines | 26 | |
| Computer on leased lines | Approax, 2,500 | Druknet esetimsye |
| Internet users | 0.73% | |
| Inter cafes | 12 | 7 in Thimpu |
| No. Of websites on Bhutan in English | 200 | Druk host 54 websites |
| Newspaper/ publications | | |
| Newspaper Kuensel circulation | 20,000 | Readership 1:14 |
| Journals | 8 | Sources: Ministry of education, health, agriculture, CBS |
| Film and Music | | |
| Cinemas | 8 | Thimpu x2,phuentsholing x2,samdrup jonghakar x1,gomtu x1 |
| General data | | |

| | | |
|----------------|---------|---|
| Literacy rate | 54% | RGOB/UNDP |
| Power coverage | 35% | Bhutan power corporation expects to electrify 42% of population by 2007 |
| Population | 690,000 | RGOB |

Sources: -RGOB (2003) *Media impact study 2003*

APPENDIX-IV

Royal kasho (charter) issued by his majesty Jigme Kheser Namgyal Wangchuk in 2010



TASHICHHOZONG
Tashichho Dzong

The rights to freedom of information, expression and of the media enshrined in the Constitution are fundamental to democracy. In our small nation, media can be even more effective in encouraging debate and participation, vital to building a vibrant democracy.

However, today, our media agencies are young and their exemplary commitment and desire to perform their duties are not matched by adequate resources. As it is my sacred duty to ensure the success of our young democracy, I have decided, through the exercise of my Royal Prerogative of Kidu, to strengthen media agencies so that they may carry out their duties, without fear or favour, in the interest of democracy.

It is my hope that the Bhutan Media Foundation established under this Charter, shall serve to foster the growth of a strong responsible media capable of playing an important role in the social, economic and political growth of the nation.

Granted on the 21st day of February, 2010 at Tashichho Dzong.

His Majesty The Druk Gyalpo

Source:- www.moic.bt/

