

Gross National Happiness and Biodiversity Conservation in Bhutan

By Elizabeth Allison

Introduction

The Kingdom of Bhutan, a country the size of Switzerland sandwiched between Tibet (China) and India in the Himalaya Range, has pursued a unique path to modern economic development that has allowed it to maintain vast swaths of forest, along with the numerous rare and endangered species that inhabit the forests. Because of its location at the margin between the temperate Palearctic realm of Eurasia and the tropical Indo-Malayan realm of the Indian subcontinent, Bhutan is home to remarkable biological diversity, including 5446 species of vascular plants, 178 species of mammals and 770 species of resident and migratory birds.¹ Bhutan's vast forests cover 72.5% of the nation and include the last remaining large tracts of mid-hill Himalayan ecosystem. Elsewhere in the Himalaya, this ecosystem, which is the most hospitable for human habitation, has been cleared for agriculture.² Because of the number of endemic species of wildlife and its intact forests, and the degree of threat faced, Bhutan is part of the Indo-Burma biodiversity hotspot of the eastern Himalaya, as identified by Conservation International.³

An essential component of the country's development strategy is the pronouncement by King Jigme Singye Wangchuk that "Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross National Product." In 1996, the King said ". . . Most socio-economic indicators are an attempt at measuring means; they do not measure ends. . . . I wish to propose happiness as a policy objective. . ." ⁴ This belief in personal well-being that is built on social, cultural and spiritual needs in addition to material ones is based in the country's Buddhist ethics that have guided the cautious economic development initiatives as the country has entered the modern age.

While both the pristine natural environment and the emphasis on Gross National Happiness (GNH) are sources of healthy cultural pride for the Bhutanese, little has been written about their connection and influence on each other. However, both are emphasized as essential to Bhutan's future in the guiding vision document, *Bhutan 2020*. It may be that the connection is

1 Tobgay Namgyal, "Sustaining Conservation Finance: Future Directions for the Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation," in *Journal of Bhutan Studies*, Summer 2001, Vol. 3, No. 1. available at http://www.bhutanstudies.com/pages/journal/3_1_folder/contents.html. Accessed 5/1/03.

2 PBS - The Living Edens. "Bhutan: The Last Shangri-La," available at http://www.pbs.org/edens/bhutan/Bhu_dragon4.htm. Accessed 5/1/03.

3 See http://www.biodiversityhotspots.org/xp/Hotspots/indo_burma/ for details.

4 Quoted on website of UNDP Bhutan: <http://www.undp.org.bt/Index2.htm>. Accessed 5/1/03.

so obvious to some Bhutanese so as not to bear mentioning. The website of Sherubtse College alludes to the connections between environmental conservation and happiness, noting

Students graduating from this College join the community of the nation's policy makers, educators, builders and developers. If they are only aware of development needs and are not aware of the delicate links and balance between environment and development, they may collectively contribute to a process of development that cannot be ultimately sustained and thereby such education gap can also contribute to a cumulative process that may undermine the collective basis of human happiness. ⁵

This statement reveals a recognition of the deep interconnection of human and environmental well-being. Both the continued existence of rich biodiversity and the concept of GNH grow from the foundations of Bhutan's Buddhist religious and cultural traditions. Conservation and GNH are two aspects of Bhutan's unique social ethic that maintains a strong focus on viewing beings as ends in themselves, rather than means. This paper seeks to elucidate the threads that link biodiversity, Buddhism, GNH and evidence for the biophilia hypothesis – the notion that humans have an innate affinity for nature – in Bhutan. According to American socio-biologist Edward O. Wilson and American ecologist Stephen R. Kellert, the human species evolved in conjunction with natural processes that shaped human faculties and cognition. Because of this co-evolution, human beings are intrinsically dependent upon close relations with nature and natural processes. Proponents of the biophilia hypothesis argue that close association with natural processes is an ingrained need, necessary for the well-being and development of individuals and the human species as a whole. In identifying the values humans with which humans imbue nature, supporters of the biophilia hypothesis give as much attention to spiritual and social values as to material and economic values, highlighting the importance of the natural environment to all aspects of human well-being. In Bhutan, biodiversity conservation and GNH appear as mutually-reinforcing phenomena, arising from the nation's Buddhist culture, and mirroring to the biophilia hypothesis. The maintenance of rich biodiversity appears to contribute to the nation's Gross National Happiness. ⁶

About Bhutan

Located in the eastern reaches of the Himalaya Range, Bhutan is a ruggedly mountainous country, in which the terrain rises from a few hundred feet above sea level to more than 20,000 feet within less than 100 miles. Steep north-south mountain bands divide the country into three distinct regions – Western, Central and Eastern. Three distinct climatic bands further divide

⁵ Sherubtse College Environmental Studies Department. <http://www.sherubtse.edu.bt/index.html>. Accessed 5/2/03.

⁶ Unattributed statements about Bhutan are based on knowledge gained through two summers of field work (2001, 2002), which included more than 100 interviews conducted throughout the country.

the country into tropical, temperate with monsoon, and alpine ecosystems. Extreme topography and self-imposed isolationism kept Bhutan cut off from visitors beyond Himalayan traders until the mid-1970s. Foreign dignitaries visited for the coronation of King Jigme Singye Wangchuk (the present King) in 1974.⁷ Thereafter, trekking tourism was gradually introduced, first limited to 200 visitors a year, who were required to travel in groups of six with a government guide and pay \$130 per person per day.⁸ Today, tourism is limited not by a quota, but by a daily fee of \$200 - \$250 instituted by the government to ensure "high quality, low volume tourism." This effectively limits pleasure travelers to fewer than 8000 annually,⁹ which prevents the sparsely populated country from being overrun by backpackers, like much of the rest of South and Southeast Asia. With a population of about 700,000, Bhutan remains "under-populated" - Nepal, Bhutan's western neighbor, has three times the land area but more than 20 times the population of Bhutan. Thimphu, the capitol city, about a hour's drive from the national airport, has a population of approximately 40,000 and no traffic lights.

Historical isolation and tight control of tourism have limited foreign influence in Bhutan. While a small number of educated elite fill government jobs in the capitol city, 85% of Bhutan's populace follows a traditional way of life,¹⁰ living in small villages of traditionally constructed houses and relying on small-scale agriculture, livestock, and forest products for their needs. Farmers are typically small, averaging two acres in the mountainous north, and eight acres in the foothills of the south. Only 7.8% of Bhutan's land area is under cultivation¹¹ and much of this is plowed by oxen pulling wooden plows. In the rugged areas, farmers cluster in the fertile river bottoms, cultivating rice in terraced paddies, as well as potatoes and maize. Wheat, buckwheat, and millet grow at the higher elevations. Kitchen gardens provide vegetables including chilies, tomatoes, onions, asparagus, squash, and leafy greens. Agricultural extension workers are introducing additional fruits and vegetables to provide greater variety and nutrition in the rural diets. Cows, and yaks in alpine areas, provide milk and cheese. Poorer families may keep chicken or pigs. Rearing pigs is considered to be vulgar, "low class" and sinful activity because the only reason to keep a pig is to slaughter it, contradicting the Buddhist admonition to protect all life. Villagers harvest a variety of non-timber forest products including fiddleheads, mushrooms, leafy green vegetables, and dozens of medicinal plants. Villagers also rely on the forest for construction materials, firewood, and fodder.

7 Stan Armington, *Bhutan*, (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 1998), 30.

8 Armington, 30.

9 Tashi Gyeltshen, "The Tourism Trends," *Kuensel: Bhutan's National Newspaper*, March 10, 2001.

10 National Environment Commission (NEC), *The Middle Path*, (Royal Government of Bhutan: 1998), 36.

11 National Environment Commission, *The Middle Path: National Environment Strategy for Bhutan* (Royal Government of Bhutan: 1998), 36 - 37.

Development in Bhutan

Development is a double-edged sword, bringing education, healthcare, and enhanced material livelihoods, along with the tendency toward homogenization of food, fashion, and entertainment that has been called “the march of the monoculture.”¹² The positive aspects of development have been the creation of infrastructure for free universal healthcare and education. Life expectancy had increased from approximately 45 years for men and 49 years for women in 1985 to 66 years for both sexes in 1998.¹³ Health services are provided through 661 facilities in 1998, up from 56 in 1974.¹⁴ The number of educational institutes tripled in 25 years, reaching 322. More than 100,000 students were enrolled in school in 1998 – seven times as many as were enrolled in 1974 – and literacy had reached 54%.¹⁵

The last decade has seen increasing inroads of Westernization, especially in Thimphu. Cable television, with its numerous channels arrived in 1999, and internet access came the following year. Video movies are available for rent in the larger towns. These forms of media bring images of materially extravagant lives, relentless violence, and natural disasters that provide a distorted view of the world to those who have not developed the visual sophistication of media-drenched Westerners. While national dress is required in schools, government offices, religious building, and public places in an effort to maintain a strong sense of national identity, hip young urbanites prefer jeans or track pants, and the national newspaper recently chronicled the trend of diet pill use among young women who want to look stylish in tight jeans.¹⁶

The Royal Government takes pains to clarify that development in Bhutan is not only material development, but must also be emotional and spiritual development in keeping with the Buddhist ethic of personal development toward enlightenment for the good of all sentient beings. This emphasis reminds us that a person is more than a collection of material wants and needs, but has essential spiritual and emotional capacities that must be expressed. The Chairman of the Council of Ministers clarified the connections between these concepts in a 1998 speech.

Within Bhutanese culture, inner spiritual development is as prominent a focus as external material development. This follows from an original meaning of development in [a] Bhutanese context in which development meant enlightenment of the individual. I hasten to add that enlightenment is not solely an object of religious activity. Enlightenment is [the] blossoming of

12 Helena Norberg-Hodge, “The March of the Monoculture,” *The Ecologist*, May-June 1999, v29, i3, 194.

13 25 Years a King: His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuk, (National Steering Committee for the Royal Silver Jubilee, 1999), 25.

14 25 Years a King: His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuk, 25.

15 25 Years a King: His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuk, 25.

16 Karma Choden, “Slim is In,” *Kuensel: Bhutan’s National Newspaper*, April 4, 2003. Available at <http://www.kuenselonline.com/article.php?sid=2680>.

Accessed 5/3/03.

happiness. It is made more probable by consciously creating a harmonious psychological, social, and economic environment.¹⁷

The Special Commission for Cultural Affairs works toward this goal through the “preservation, development and the promotion of the cultural heritage of Bhutan.”¹⁸ The Special Commission promotes *Driglam Namzha*, the traditional Bhutanese etiquette based on the Buddhist principles of respect, tolerance, and compassion that contribute to social harmony. The Royal Academy of Performing Arts teaches and exhibits traditional dance and music, while *Zorig Chusum* Institutes, akin to technical high schools, train students in the 13 traditional arts and crafts of Bhutan, including metal working, wood carving, bowl making, painting, embroidery, carpentry, weaving and the like.

Buddhism in Bhutan

Buddhism pervades Bhutanese culture in the central and northern areas. In the world’s only “democratic theocracy,” the Tantric form of Mahayana Buddhism is the state religion, and the King shares power with the *Je Khenpo*, the head of the monk body and the leader of state religion. The *Je Khenpo*, presiding over the 5000 state-sponsored monks mainly of the Drukpa Kayuga Buddhist sect,¹⁹ is the head of religious affairs. While external sources say that two-thirds of the population practices either Drukpa Kayuga or Nyingmapa Buddhism,²⁰ the figure seems to be closer to 100 percent in rural eastern villages, where “everyone” is Buddhist and temples, shrines, and prayer flags dot the landscape. The non-Buddhist Hindus and a few Christians are found primarily in southern Bhutan, and are mainly of Nepali extraction. This religious consistency contributes to the cultural cohesion of the country. Throughout the Kingdom, shops and homes display pictures of the King and *Je Khenpo* together.

Buddhism arrived in Bhutan in the person of Guru Rimpoche, a great eighth century saint, who continues to exert great influence on the Bhutanese. Guru Rimpoche traveled on a flying tiger from Tibet to settle a battle between two warring kings. Buddhism became entwined with the older Bon and animist beliefs, and, in the non-dualistic way of Asian thought, incorporated the pre-existing beliefs. In many parts of the country, people believe in deities and spirits inhabiting rocks, trees, mountain passes, lakes and forest fragments. These deities are believed to pre-date Buddhism –

17 Lyonpo Jigmi Y. Thinley, “Values and Development: ‘Gross National Happiness,’” Keynote Speech delivered at the Millenium Meeting for Asia and the Pacific, 30 October – 1 November, 1998, Seoul, Republic of Korea. Available at www.bhutanstudies.com/pages/gnh/3values.html (Centre for Bhutan Studies). Accessed 4/7/03.

18 The Cultural Trust Fund – Bhutan, brochure. N. d.

19 U. S. Department of State, “Bhutan: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices,” released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, March 31, 2003. Available at www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2002/18310pf.htm. Accessed 4/30/03.

20 U. S. Department of State, 2003.

some are considered to be the “original owners of the land” – and were subdued, or even converted to become protectors of the Dharma (the teachings of Buddhism) by Guru Rimpoche.

Buddhism, which assumes that all beings want to be happy, teaches Four Noble Truths: 1) life is suffused with suffering, 2) desire and attachment to material goods cause suffering, 3) releasing desire alleviates suffering, and 4) desire can be released by following the Noble Eightfold Path: right understanding, right thinking, right speech, right actions, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right meditation, which can lead to enlightenment.²¹ Those who become enlightened, the bodhisattvas, may remain on earth for the good of all beings, assisting others in reaching enlightenment. The historical Buddha discovered a “Middle Way” between extreme asceticism and extreme luxury, which Buddhists seek to emulate. Buddhists must not take what is not freely given, which means that they should not take the lives of other living creatures. Co-dependent origination, the idea that there are no independently existing causes, identities or egos, also increases the desire to protect other forms of life, and to avoid killing. The doctrine of karma teaches that one always reaps the benefits or harms of one's actions, further impetus to treat others living beings compassionately and considerately. The degree to which Buddhism pervades the society and gives rise to the notion of Gross National Happiness is captured in an essay on “The Origin of Happiness” by one of Bhutan's leading teachers and scholars, published in the national newspaper.

Without religion, one may be able to survive, but without compassion and loving-kindness, one can never survive in a society of success and peace. If one possesses both loving-kindness and compassion, he or she will most certainly be happy both in this life and the next.²²

Buddhism and Happiness

Recent empirical studies in the West reveal the ways in which Buddhism contributes to happiness. Psychologists Daniel Gilbert and Tim Wilson have shown that people tend to overestimate the degree to which an external event – such as the purchase of a new car or the death of a loved one – will influence their happiness.²³ Just as Buddhism teaches that happiness can be found by removing attachments to external cravings, empirical studies show how truly inconsequential such phenomena are. When asked how they think a future event will affect their happiness, people always overestimate its impact. When the event actually occurs, psychological coping mechanisms help people deal with tragedy, while desensitization to and accommodation of positive external changes ensures that they fail to bring

21 Barbara Crossette, *So Close to Heaven: The Vanishing Buddhist Kingdoms of the Himalayas*, (New York: Vintage Departures, 1995), 55.

22 Khenpo Phuntshok Tashi, “The Origin of Happiness,” *Kuensel: Bhutan's National Newspaper*, May 27, 2000.

23 John Gertner, “The Futile Pursuit of Happiness,” *The New York Times*, Sept. 7, 2003.

external happiness. Further, decisions made in the “heat of the moment” that are contrary to the decisions taken after cool consideration, according to empirical research into happiness by economist George Loewenstein of Carnegie-Mellon University.²⁴ Transient emotional states can drastically alter decisions, many of which affect future happiness. Decisions made when the mind is clear and unclouded by fugitive emotions are more likely to consider future consequences and thus lead to happiness. Loewenstein’s findings echo the Buddhist emphasis on watching and mastering the emotions in meditation to avoid being buffeted by the whims of passion. While none of these American researchers make explicit reference to Buddhism, the substance of their findings, which mirror Buddhist teaching and practice, support the notion that Buddhism contributes to happiness. In a predominantly Buddhist country, it is likely that the Buddhist emphasis on avoiding attachment to achieve tranquility contributes to the overall happiness of the populace.

In addition, Buddhism has been shown to have a positive effect on health. Jon Kabat-Zinn, of the Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, has studied Buddhism and health for more than 20 years. His studies have revealed that “people undergoing treatment for psoriasis heal four times as fast if they meditate; that cancer patients practicing meditation had significantly better emotional outlooks than a control group; and not only that meditation relieved symptoms in patients with anxiety and chronic pain but also that the benefits persisted up to four years after training.”²⁵ The positive effect on chronic health conditions is especially relevant to the overall maintenance of happiness. Daniel Gilbert’s studies have shown that a minor, but chronic problem, such as a painful knee, does more to drain away happiness than a major setback.²⁶ Across cultures, good health has long been assumed to be the cornerstone of a happy life.

Teachings about animals and Plants

While some have suggested that the connection between Buddhism and environmental consciousness is a facile congruence based on surface similarities, Bhutanese Buddhist beliefs teach compassion toward all living beings, and therefore, an attitude of appreciation and reverence toward the natural environment. Buddhists wish that all sentient beings may be happy and be spared from suffering. The great 14th century teacher of Buddhism in Tibet, Tsongkhapa taught “the abandonment of harm to sentient beings is to forsake all thoughts and deeds as – beating men or beasts, binding with ropes, trapping or imprisonment, piercing the noses, overburdening with

24 John Gertner, “The Futile Pursuit of Happiness,” *The New York Times*, Sept. 7, 2003.

25 Stephen S. Hall, “Is Buddhism Good for Your Health?” in *The New York Times*, Sept. 14, 2003.

26 John Gertner, “The Futile Pursuit of Happiness,” *The New York Times*, Sept. 7, 2003.

loads beyond their strength, and similar activities. ²⁷ The doctrine of reincarnation gives rise to the idea that any other being may have been one's mother in a previous life. This gives rise to a spontaneous feeling of compassion and reverence, and the desire to reduce the suffering in the lives of other sentient beings. ²⁸

Compassion and a consequent prohibition against killing are widely understood to be the key teachings of Buddhism. Even villagers, who face crop depredations from wildlife report that religion teaches them not to kill animals because it is sinful, and instructs them to maintain a good relationship between humans and animals. In interviews of 55 villagers in Trashy Yangtse, the eastern most *dzongkhag*, only 7% said that, they might kill animals that were destroying their crops. ²⁹ Three-quarters of interview respondents said that their religion (Buddhism) teaches the avoidance of harm to animals and the maintenance of positive relations with animals and the natural environment. One-third of the villagers interviewed remarked that to cut down a tree is a sin, either because to do so deprives many sentient beings of their homes, or because it takes the life of the tree itself.

This emphasis on the maintenance of positive relations with the surrounding environment reflects the agrarian tendency toward conservatism in the face of unpredictable and overwhelming natural forces. It also signals an insight into the nature of happiness, which is less frequently found in extreme good fortune than in consistent and balanced situations. People tend to overestimate the difference that positive or negative events will make in their lives, according research conducted by Harvard psychologist Daniel Gilbert. ³⁰ In reality, vast good fortune or ill fortune tend to matter less than people expect, and thus maintaining an even keel is a more effective and enjoyable long-term strategy.

In addition to the Buddhist religious prohibitions on cutting down trees, villagers also experience the claim of deities, the prior inhabitants of the land believed to inhabit various features of the landscape. These unenlightened beings, believed to pre-date Buddhism, have rights to the land that supersede those of the villagers. Deities are most frequently found in places with huge, old trees, which the villagers will not disturb for fear that retribution, such as sickness or even death, will come to themselves or someone in the village. Even when deity abodes are found in the midst of settlements and paddy fields, villagers tend to avoid them. Thus, in addition to the positive teachings of Buddhism that encourage concern for other living beings, villagers experience the negative pull of fear that also shapes their actions toward deity abodes and the huge trees found within. This fear creates a negative feedback loop. Villagers

27 Dr. Chatsumarn Kabilsingh, "How Buddhism Can Help Protect Nature," in *Tree of Life: Buddhism and the Protection of Nature*, (Buddhist Perception of Nature, 1987), 11.

28 Khenpo Phuntshok Tashi, "The Importance of Life Protection: A Tibetan Buddhist View," on the website of The Government of Tibet in Exile. Available at <http://www.tibet.com/Eco/eco5.html>. Accessed 5/4/03.

29 Conducted summer 2001. Results reported in Elizabeth Allison, "The Dharma, Deities and La Dam: A Exploratory Study of the Role of Religion in Environmental Conservation in Bhutan," unpublished paper, May 2002.

30 John Gertner, "The Futile Pursuit of Happiness," *The New York Times*, Sept. 7, 2003.

refuse to harvest natural resources from certain places because they are believed to be inhabited by deities. Avoidance allows the trees in such places to grow to enormous size and age, which increases the aesthetic, emotional and affiliative value of such places, furthering inhibiting the temptation to extract resources or cut trees in such places.

Conservation Commitment

Buddhist and traditional beliefs about appropriate interactions with animals and plants are codified in Bhutan's conservation principles and laws. *Bhutan 2020* begins its section on "environmentally sustainable development," one of the five development goals, with the recognition that Bhutan's "approach to the environment has traditionally been anchored in ... Buddhist beliefs and values. We not only respect nature, we also confer on it a living mysticism. Places are identified with deities, divinities and spirits."³¹ This approach connects environmental preservation and cultural preservation, thus rooting the present Bhutanese in the context of their forebears.

The connection between environmental and spiritual realms echoes the biophilia hypothesis – the notion that humans "need to affiliate with nature and living diversity not just to ensure their material and physical well-being, but also to satisfy emotional, intellectual and spiritual needs."³² This innate affiliation with nature is recognized in *Bhutan 2020's* discussion of environmental conservation. The document points out that, in adopting Western standards for environmental conservation such as park boundaries, the government has "introduced lines of demarcation between humans and nature that formerly never existed." Ironically, this disengagement could lead to greater exploitation of natural resources by artificially separating people from the matrix of nature in which they live. The parks and protected areas have not taken the extreme step of removing indigenous human populations, and rangers work closely with villagers to improve their livelihoods so that they benefit from, rather than resent, the parks. "This establishes a clear link between environmental conservation and the conservation of [Bhutan's] cultural heritage."³³ Within the cultural heritage are the values and ethics that make culturally-appropriate environmental conservation possible. Protecting the culture allows for the expression of traditional values in relation to the natural environment; protecting the natural environment provides content and application for traditional values.

In 1974, the National Assembly mandated that Bhutan's forest cover never drop below 60%; 29 years later, forest cover blanketed 72.5% of the nation, and 26% of the land was protected in national parks, reserves, and sanctuaries (Figure 1).³⁴ Another 9.5% of the nation is protected in the

31 RGOB 1999, 87.

32 Stephen R. Kellert, *The Value of Life* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1996), 27.

33 RGOB 1999, 87.

34 RGOB <<http://www.kingdomofbhutan.com/kingdom.html>>

biological corridors that link the nine protected areas.³⁵ Timber harvesting, even for personal use, requires a government permit. The Royal Government's laws prohibit killing wild pests, unless they are caught in the act of damaging crops. The burning of fields and scrubby forests, previously done to promote pasture growth and to clear land for shifting cultivation, is now being banned.

Biodiversity

The Biodiversity Action Plan, like *Bhutan 2020*, is built on traditional and Buddhist values, recognizing that "the mountains, rivers, streams, rocks and soils of Bhutan are believed to be the domain of spirits. The Buddhist respect for all living things has led to the development and adoption of environmentally friendly strategies."³⁶ Bhutan's parks and protected areas are home to 72 of the world's threatened species.³⁷ Bomdeling Wildlife Sanctuary in northeastern Bhutan harbors four globally endangered mammals (tiger, snow leopard, red panda and capped langur), and five globally threatened birds (rufous-necked hornbill, Pall's fish eagle, chestnut-breasted partridge, black-necked crane and wood snipe).³⁸ Other globally vulnerable animals occurring within Bhutan include musk deer, leopard, Himalayan black bear, serow, and Himalayan monal.³⁹ Sixteen threatened bird species and 46 species of rhododendron occur in Bhutan.⁴⁰ Rare plant species include blue poppy and yew. Chinese caterpillar is a highly desired and increasingly rare fungus used in traditional medicines. Many of the reptiles, amphibians, fishes, and invertebrates have not yet been surveyed. Such biological richness in a small country is all the more notable in a world in which the global loss of biodiversity is considered by some to be *the* most urgent problem facing science.⁴¹ In an age of increasing urbanization – 47% of the world's population lived in cities in 2000, up from 30% in 1950 – fewer people around the world have the opportunity to interact with a wide variety of life on a regular basis. In developed countries, three quarters of the population lives in urban areas, while only 40% of the population lives in cities in less developed countries. Urbanization in this century is expected to occur most rapidly in less developed countries.⁴²

35 <<http://www.bhutantrustfund.org/framePA.html>>

36 Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), "Biodiversity Action Plan for Bhutan," (Thimphu: Royal Government of Bhutan, 1998), 18.

37 IUCN 2002. 2002 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Downloaded on 04 May 2003.

38 Nature Conservation Division (NCD), Department of Forestry Services, "Bumdeling Wildlife Sanctuary: Draft Conservation Management Plan, July 2001 – June 2007" (Ministry of Agriculture, Royal Government of Bhutan: May 2001), 3.
39 NCD, 3.

40 Rebecca Pradhan and Tandin Wangdi, *Threatened Birds in Bhutan*, (Nepal, 1999). Rebecca Pradhan, *Wild Rhododendrons of Bhutan*. (Thimphu, Bhutan: 1999).

41 E. O. Wilson, *The Diversity of Life*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

42 Population Reference Bureau, "Human Populations: Fundamentals of Growth Patterns of World Urbanization," available at <http://www.prb.org>.

In a country of such rich natural diversity, with which most people still have frequent encounters, it seems likely that this natural abundance does have some effect on the human psyche. Throughout history, humans have co-evolved with other species, and it is only recently that we have removed ourselves from the panoply of life around us. Even in my short time in Bhutan, part of which was spent in Thimphu or traveling in a car, I was fortunate to observe closely four rare mammals – the red panda, golden langur (found only in Bhutan), takin, and Himalayan black bear – along with countless butterflies, birds, and lizards. (The downside of plentiful life is the rich population of fleas, leeches, and other biting insects!) For villagers living daily lives close to the land, the abundance of diverse wild plant and animal species would seem to be a positive factor contributing to the experience of Gross National Happiness. One villager articulated the connection between people and animals:

We don't harm the animals because when there are no animals we feel uneasy and sad. Since animals benefit humans both directly and indirectly, they must be protected. For example, when wild dogs come, the wild boar is reduced. When wild dogs are reduced, the boar increases. Indirectly, animals help us. Cultivating crops feeds the animals, even if we don't cultivate for that purpose. This maintains the relationship between humans and animals.

Others pointed out that humans and animals are essentially the same – both being made up of flesh and blood – and therefore to harm an animal would be as disconcerting as to harm a human. While the villagers face troublesome crop depredations by wild animals, some take this in stride, as a natural give and take between humans and their environment. One woman said that some crop loss was to be expected, so a bit of extra was planted, for the animals. This close connection with other forms of life resonates with the biophilia hypothesis, the idea that people have an “innate tendency to focus on life and lifelike processes.”⁴³ The biophilia hypothesis suggests that humans rely on living diversity for fundamental mental, physical and emotional needs, and that meaningful relationships with the natural world are necessary for optimum human functioning.⁴⁴ Thus, human well-being requires much more than satisfactory human relationships and material well-being. Human well-being depends on the wholeness and coherence of living systems, and the well-being – or happiness – of one is not disconnected from that of another. It is here that biophilia begins to sound a bit like the Bhutanese formulation of Gross National Happiness.

org/Content/NavigationMenu/PRB/Educators/Human_Population/Urbanization2/Patterns_of_World_Urbanization1.htm. Accessed 5/5/03.

43 E. O. Wilson quoted in Stephen R. Kellert, *The Value of Life* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1996), 6.

44 Kellert, 7.

Gross National Happiness

As promulgated by King Jigme Singye Wangchuk since the late 1980s, Gross National Happiness is Bhutan's "central development concept."⁴⁵ GNH begins with the idea that "happiness is the ultimate desire of all human beings and that all else is a means for achieving happiness."⁴⁶ This formulation "places the individual at the centre of all development efforts and it recognizes that the individual has material, spiritual, and emotional needs. It recognizes that spiritual development cannot and should not be defined exclusively in material terms of the increased consumption of goods and services."⁴⁷ This is not an esoteric theory confined to the offices of the capitol city. GNH is discussed regularly among educated people. At the Spring 2003 Sherubtse College graduation, the Queen reminded graduates that value education is as important as knowledge and skill in achieving Gross National Happiness.⁴⁸

Prevailing economic theories register increases in national GDP, even as greater shares of resources are used to combat crime, drug addiction, or environmental degradation, which are drains on society.⁴⁹ As many environmental economists have noted, the rapid depletion of natural resources registers as an increase in GDP, even as a nation drives down its natural capital. In these examples, GDP has an *inverse* relationship to GNH – as circumstances get worse, the economic standing of a nation rises. Bhutan rejects the validity of GDP as a measure of national well-being, insisting, "The key to happiness is to be found, once basic material needs have been met, in the satisfaction of non-material needs and in emotional and spiritual growth."⁵⁰ This insight is not a new one, reflecting, among other formulations, Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, which suggests that after basic physiological and safety needs are met, people are more motivated by the "higher" needs for affiliation, achievement and self-actualization.⁵¹ Much of the emotional malaise of the West stems from the consumerist society's continual effort to do a better and better job at fulfilling our basic needs at the expense of our higher needs. Bhutan's guiding planning document, *Bhutan 2020*, recognizes this mismatch between the current consumerist emphasis and human needs, stating:

The concept of Gross National Happiness accordingly rejects the notion that there is a direct and unambiguous relationship between wealth and happiness. If such a relationship existed, it would follow that those in the richest countries should be the

45 RGOB, *Bhutan 2020: A Vision for Peace, Prosperity and Happiness*, (Planning Commission, RGOB: 1999), 45.

46 RGOB 1999, 45.

47 RGOB 1999, 45.

48 "Sherbutse Convocation," Kuensel: Bhutan's National Newspaper, April 19, 2003. Available at www.kuenselonline.com. Accessed 4/18/03.

49 RGOB 1999, 46.

50 RGOB 1999, 46.

51 See, for example, <http://www.ship.edu/~cgboeree/maslow.html>. Accessed 5/3. 03.

happiest in the world. We know this is not the case. This marginal increase has also been accompanied by the growth of many social problems as well as such phenomena as stress-related diseases as well as suicides, surely the very antithesis of happiness. ”⁵²

In its recognition that material development is not the only valid measure of human progress, and its awareness that declining natural resources are a drain rather than a boon to GDP, the notion of GNH is inherently environmentally benign. To guide specific development actions, GNH has been translated into five development objectives: human development, culture and heritage, balanced and equitable development, governance, and environmental conservation. ⁵³ In recognizing that environmental conservation is part of creating GNH, Bhutan links cultural and environmental preservation, and recognizes that well-being must extend beyond human needs.

Mutual Conditioning of Biodiversity and Gross National Happiness

Is it possible that, in addition to promoting environmental conservation as we have seen, GNH also *benefits* from environmental conservation, specifically biodiversity preservation? The Biodiversity Action Plan recognizes the inextricable interconnection of culture and nature: “in Bhutan, the ethical and aesthetic roles of biodiversity are integral components of the culture. ”⁵⁴ Building on the biophilia hypothesis, which suggests that erosion of dependence on nature poses a significant cognitive, affective and spiritual risk to humans,⁵⁵ I suggest that, in addition to being protected by the concept of Gross National Happiness, the extant diverse wild species of Bhutan also *contribute* to Gross National Happiness. As Rene Dubos pointed out, “The cult of wilderness is not a luxury; it is a necessity for the preservation of mental health. ”⁵⁶ Thus, it is no surprise that a country with rich wilderness and biological diversity also emphasizes happiness, a key aspect of mental health.

Several intriguing studies point to the salubrious influence of the natural environment on human health, broadly defined by the World Health Organization as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity. ”⁵⁷ After experiencing stressful events or medical interventions, subjects who viewed nature scenes, plants, or aquaria recovered more quickly and experienced fewer signs of distress than control subjects in several different studies. ⁵⁸ These studies suggest that the presence and proximity of a beautiful, intact and coherent natural environment may contribute positively to the well-being of the Bhutanese who live lives surrounded by wild nature.

52 RGOB 1999, 46.

53 RGOB 1999, 47.

54 MOA, 9.

55 Kellert, 7.

56 Cited in Kellert, 27.

57 E. O. Wilson, *The Future of Life*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), 139.

58 Wilson, 139-140.

Whether the Bhutanese are empirically happier than, say, North Americans is difficult to test or prove. My subjective experience of the Bhutanese is that they are much more patient, calm, grounded, peaceful, content, and cheerful than Americans – in a word, happier. Even with language barriers, I find myself laughing and smiling much more in Bhutan. However, we should not succumb to the “myth of the contented villager.” A study of self-reported happiness levels in various countries of the world reported in *The Atlantic Monthly* noted, “In poor countries, city-dwellers report themselves to be markedly happier than villagers.”⁵⁹ Eastern European countries and those of the former Soviet Union (Ukraine, Russia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Belarus, and Latvia) registered the lowest life satisfaction, while Northern European and Scandinavian countries (Switzerland, Denmark, Luxembourg, Iceland, Sweden, and Ireland) reported the highest levels of satisfaction. Intriguingly, several of the countries are associated with beautiful landscapes and active outdoor lifestyles. Japan, Australia, Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Armenia were the only “Asian” countries included in the study, and all ranked lower in the happiness index. Up to a point, studies found, wealthier people are happier, but the law of diminishing returns kicks in once basic needs are met,⁶⁰ just as the formulation of GNH points out. Further, according to political scientist Robert E. Lane, the chief sources of happiness are material comfort and social and family intimacy, which are often at odds as economic development increases material comfort but weakens family bonds through social mobility.⁶¹ The intriguing question, which has been little studied beyond the health studies mentioned above, is to what degree connection with other living beings contributes to the “social intimacy” aspect of happiness.⁶²

At the very least, the loss of biodiversity, and the subsequent experience of living in an “empty” world, is not a drain on the GNH of Bhutan, the way it can be in urban areas of the United States. In her clarion call about the dangers of pesticides, Rachel Carson related a bleak “fable for tomorrow” in which spring arrived in a “town in the heart of America,” but flowers failed to bloom and birds did not sing.⁶³ The most disturbing aspect of this world of “tomorrow” is its stillness and lifelessness. The humans, increasingly

59 Don Peck and Ross Douthat, “Does Money Buy Happiness?” in *The Atlantic Monthly*, Jan. / Feb. 2003, 42-43.

60 Peck and Douthat, 43.

61 Peck and Douthat, 43

62 Several studies with pets show that companion animals reduce stress and improve health in older people. See, for example, Parminder Raina, et al, “Influence of Companion Animals on the Physical and Psychological Health of Older People: An Analysis of a One-Year Longitudinal Study,” in *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, Vol. 47(3), March 1999, 323-329; and Weider Publications, “Don’t Take Valium, Take Your Dog,” in *Natural Health*, Vol. 24 (1), Jan. /Feb. 1994, 16. Other than human-wildlife conflicts, the question of how interactions with wild animals affect human well-being is less studied.

63 Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962).

humbled by unexplained malaise, were the only ones alive in a “spring without voices.” In such a situation, GNH would surely plummet.

In contrast, the Bhutanese still inhabit an environment widely populated by other beings, plants and animals, as well as the unseen ancient spirits. Their participation in such an intact and coherent system is a source of solace and sustenance, if the biophilia hypothesis is correct. Educated Bhutanese are understandably proud of their country’s preservation of a vast array of wild species, and its status as last refuge for some of the world’s most endangered species. This sense of uniqueness contributes to national pride and a desire to shelter and protect wild species.

Being unaware of the global threats to endangered species, uneducated, rural Bhutanese may not experience such an explicit recognition of the conservation value of wild species, but they clearly value wild species for their strength, beauty and cunning and for the affiliative connection they experience. When asked whether humans or wild animals were superior, nearly two-thirds of the Trashy Yangtse respondents said that each was superior in its own way. Only 9% said that humans are definitely superior.⁶⁴ In interviews, 95% of respondents said that humans and wild animals are essentially the same, in that they both have life and are both made of flesh and blood. One villager said, “There is no difference between humans and animals. If we kill animals, we feel bad. That’s why we feel mercy.” Further, villagers expressed appreciation for superior attributes, such as acute sight, hearing, and sense of smell, and the wily ways, of some animals. In viewing wild animals with respect and admiration, villagers reinforce their own position in a world that is valuable and worth protecting. They perceive that their actions toward animals have significant effects on their own happiness and well-being. In these ways, the existence and protection of significant biodiversity and the concept of Gross National Happiness are mutually reinforcing.

Gross National Happiness, a development concept based in Bhutan’s particular circumstances, culture and religious tradition, grows from a situation in which biodiversity has flourished historically, and in which biodiversity conservation is esteemed. The condition of biological richness is then seen as part of that which is uniquely Bhutanese, connected in history to culture and religion, and therefore necessary for GNH. Other living beings have been incorporated into the definition of well-being. In this way, GNH and biological diversity work together, creating a self-reinforcing, sustainable positive feedback loop. The positive feedback loop is balanced by a negative feedback loop created by the villagers’ fear of locations where deities are believed to live, allowing trees in these places to increase in size and age, becoming ever more emotionally valuable to the villagers and even

⁶⁴ Interviews of 55 villagers in Trashy Yangtse conducted summer 2001. Results reported in Elizabeth Allison, “The Dharma, Deities and La Dam: A Exploratory Study of the Role of Religion in Environmental Conservation in Bhutan,” unpublished paper, May 2002.

less likely to be cut down. Growing from indigenous beliefs, this feedback loop is self-perpetuating, and is thus a sustainable means of “boundary-less and borderless conservation.”⁶⁵ Building on Buddhism, GNH incorporates the needs of other living beings into its definition and balances the needs of human and non-human species in a way that does justice to both.

Along with providing a sustainable and just approach to conservation and development in Bhutan, the philosophy of Gross National Happiness provides a much-needed beacon of hope for a world that hungers for harmony and happiness. The growing interest in Buddhism in the West is one sign of this hunger. Another indicator is the appeal of articles on topics such as Buddhism and happiness. The New York Times, the most respected daily newspaper in the United States, tracked the articles from its online edition that were most frequently emailed to friends of readers. Articles on happiness and Buddhism were the first and third most emailed articles, respectively,⁶⁶ showing that American hunger for alternatives to the consumerist monoculture. Incorporating biodiversity conservation and Buddhism, Gross National Happiness offers a different, and ultimately more humane, approach.

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⁶⁵ Ugyen Chewang brought this phrase to my attention, personal communication, March 2003.

⁶⁶ Tom Zeller, “Most E-Mailed Articles of 2003: For Your Information . . . ,” in *The New York Times*, Dec. 29, 2003.

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Turning to Become Happy: An Experience in Community Practice in Thailand *By Liam Butjantha*

Summary

A community whose members immigrated from E-Sarn (NorthEastern Region) of Thailand for a couple of decades has had collectively learnt and apprehended by themselves. Although this community locates in poor accessible area of the country, consumerism and agro-industrialism have dominated as the mainstream of people's life. However they can change their crisis to opportunity. They are able to turn from indecent behaviour to sufficient way of life. They have done by means of networking the cooperation among active groups. They are able to rehabilitate the total natural resources on holistic basis. Reviving their traditional way of life to be self-reliance by making use of social capital and culture of E-Sarn living. This is the best practice on strengthening the community where it paves their way to happiness.

Ban Na E-Sarn

Ban Na E-Sarn (Ban = Village, Na = Paddy Field) has been a newly settlement village in Chachoengsao, a province in eastern region of Thailand. Most of the population immigrated from Buriram, Surin and Khonkaen, the provinces in northeastern region (called E-Sarn) of the country. In 1987 villagers from the region were seasonally hired for logging and cane harvesting. After the harvesting season, some villagers settled down in that area forming a small village called Ban Na E-Sarn. The villagers keep tradition, culture, dialect, dwelling, and way of life as same as their origin. This village locates about 150 km. far east from Bangkok. Although it is not so far away from the capital city but it is poor accessible area due to terrible traffic. There is 747 population in 168 households. The surrounding is National Forest Conservation where the land is nourished and fertile. Thus this area is suitable for agriculture.

Struggling

At the beginning, the cultivation was mostly monocrop for cash. The fertile land contributed to high productivity. Meanwhile chemicals were used in forms of fertilizer and pesticide. The usage was more and more to increase productivity. Consequently, cost of agricultural product was higher and higher while the quality of soil had worsened. The productivity is then declined. Income was not sufficient for living. Meanwhile chemical had deteriorated the ecosystem as well as their health. Many of the villagers emigrated to earn better income in big cities as low-rate laborforces. The family life disintegrated. Children were left behind living with grandmother or grandfather while their parents were away for survival. The community has broken down. The villagers have also faced with the lack of basic

education, health services, public utility, and capital for investment. They have had increasingly collective debt from bank loan as well as illegal loan. The most serious problem was insufficient rice to eat in the family throughout the year.

Suffering

The more cash crops they grew the less they gained. The harder they worked the more stress they got. The villagers have been trying to find the way out from their poverty and debt. Many of them release their stress by drinking. Drinking restrain them from suffering a moment. Some play gamble and lottery as for hoping to be rich. Most of them try to find better job and better living in the places outside the village where the living was not suitable for them. Once in 1993 the headman Wiboon of another village got lost during his pilgrimage around eastern forest conservation. He accidentally passed through this village and found that most of the villagers got drunken. At that moment the villagers had weak morale and discourage. They had suffering from never ending vicious problems. They were unable to handle their life. It was depending upon external factors rather than themselves.

Training

In 1996, Headman Wiboon Kemchalerm and the Group of Study and Conservation of Eastern Forest with co-operation of Community Forestry Study Center had conducted a seminar programme for teachers and community leader who were living surround the Eastern Forest. Mr.Liam, the assistance to the headman of Na E-Sarn had been unintentionally sent to attend the seminar to replace the headman who was unavailable that moment. He had opportunity to see managerial process of the headman Wiboon on growing local vegetables, plants and herbs in self-sustainable basis. It was under the concept of agro-forestry system where as emphasized on bio-diversity and natural structure of plantation system. Then After discussion til late night, he found that drinking is not the solution of his problems but wisdom. He learned that wisdom is the way to survive of them. He thought that his life should restart somehow. He realized that he has to do something that should be different. It must not be the same. They finally began from searching from inside finding ways to solve their problems together.

Turning

A method he began was "Family Expense Note". It made a remarkable change to the way of life of Mr.Liam as well as other Na E-Sarn villagers. Expense note made him learn why he increased a lot of debt and how wrong it was in his life. Every evening he and his family members had meeting to make a note on daily expenses in the family. How much they paid for stuff of children, mother and him. Of course, his children always asked how much for smoking and drinking father paid. The grand total was calculated at the end of each month. It was found a frightening clue that expenses for smoking and drinking shared about 70 percent of all household expenses. This clue made Mr.Liam realize the cause of his debt. It was him who has

made family suffer. He began rethinking the new solution for survival by reducing household expenses and rearrange life style. Cash crop for money was by no means essential to his life. It never makes money enough for daily living. He found that the profit from corn farming was only 10 percents of household expenses for foodstuff. That was why his debt increased with no choice. Fortunately he had come across to the turning point of his life.

Local Spirit

Traditionally the best thing of Thai was always labelled mother to whom Thai people spiritually pay respect. There are four spiritual mothers for Na E-Sarn villagers. Those are Mother of Land, Mother of River, Mother of Rice and Mother of every Child. Thus the villagers should never pollute them but respect them like their mother. They have to keep chemical away from land and rivers which nourish the paddy field serving healthy mothers who grow children. Annually a Buddhist rite is set up to pay respect to the Mother of Rice at this village. This rite is a process of community education in order to learn about rice as a source of life and its contribution to health. Rice Bank is promoted. Variety of rice recipes is demonstrated. Experiences are transferred from generation to generation.

Members of family who have every single birth must plant 20 trees in the community forest and look after them continuously. Meanwhile community welfare will give first cash as for a capital of new life.

Become Happiness

Since then he has changed from cash crop farming to “Grow What We Eat and Eat What We Grow”. He stopped corn-farming then cultivated household fresh garden, fed fish and chicken, collected eggs everyday. The rest from household consumption he sold and saved money. Meanwhile he abstained from smoking and drinking. His wife stopped gambling through lottery. Sooner or later the debt was gradually decreased. These made the other villagers surprise why he was able to payback his debt without cash crops farming.

Furthermore evening meeting among family members has improved relationship between them. They encouraged and help each other to recover from critical moment of life. It was the delightful and delicacy of life. The husband prepared and irrigated land, wife planted seed and took care of it. Some of their fresh plants were preserved as prickles for selling within the village. He demonstrated his new life style to the villagers and it has shown dramatic changes to their eyes. Many villagers followed him and realized the same result. They are healthy and then become happiness.

Expansion

Thereafter the serious problems were relieved. Meetings among the villagers were regularly done in order to share experiences. Study visits to other villages were organized. They had learnt many more things from so many things from villages around the country. Those were able to complete their life. Several interventions learnt from other were applied to their villages.

They further developed lesson learnt from other to real practices. This was therefore the networking of interactive learning through action.

Veracious Saving Fund by means of totally participation of villagers made them realize that money is not an end. It is just a mean to an end. So they have changed their mentality of fund management from money-oriented to be process-oriented. Problems were never discourage them but problems made learn more. Learning process was the essence of all the events rather than money.

Beside these, there were about 50 percent of the villagers who were facing with shortage of rice for household eating around the year. Rice Fund was one of the innovations to supply rice for them. Rice was kept in the central storehouse of the village. It was distributed to those who needed. Then it will be returned during the next harvest season. This was also the way of villagers who live together with empathy and generous.

In order to keep people strong and healthy while saving cost of hulling the unhusked rice. They began to use man-powered mill, which is for household use. This tool can be easily built and operated by all family members. In addition, besides this kind of physically exercise making them strong, the relationship among family's members gets stronger as well.

Fish Bank was another of local wisdom of sustainably fish conservation for food. This was done by applying Buddhist way of life i.e. mercy and forgiveness to living creature. A public pond with growing fish was committed by the villagers as non-fishery area. However fishing can be done outside that area. During rainy season fish naturally escape from the pond to outside. It became sustainable food source of the villagers.

There were also several interventions have come up continuously in this village such as Health Fund for medical services, Funeral Fund, Education Fund for students, Emergency Loan, Learning Fund etc. All of these collectively contributed to happiness among them.

Apprehension

They have learnt that dependency to external resources and/or stuff destroyed community strengthening. To give more value to money and properties than mind and spirit destroyed local wisdom. To use money as a mean to changes rather than as an end of changes could be done through several interventions such as community welfare, saving fund, chemical free farming etc. Furthermore sharing among villages in several regions of the country broaden their view from which interventions could be innovated in appropriate to particular community. Meanwhile issues of interest also contribute to way of life as the whole in order to reach right understanding of hapiness. For instance agro-forestry system, community-based economy, systemic local resources management, land management and utilization, agricultural system, forest management, water resources management, fish management and human resources mangement are linked together as a relative chain to foster each other.

Finally wisdom has grown from these incidences then it turns that community to become happy.

Beyond Disease Prevention and Health Promotion: Health for all Through Sustainable Community Development *By Dr. Tantip Thamrongwarangoon*

Theme: Happiness through Sustainable Community Development Foundation

Summary

There are several way to reach ideology of life, happiness. At Ubolrat District Hospital, the government run hospital, an outstanding foundation has been established. It is Sustainable Community Development Foundation (SCDF). This foundation has served the local community as a social institution. Buddhist way of life, local wisdom, holistic development attribute the foundation. It was initiated from problems found in health services in the hospital. It was found that the way to cope with the health problems could be done outside the hospital. They have worked by means of the foundation. Of course, their works have been beyond conventional disease prevention and health promotion. The patients with HIV/AIDS can live along the rest of their life with happiness for instance.

UBOLRAT DISTRICT HOSPITAL, THAILAND

The Setting

Ubolrat hospital is a government hospital located in Ubolrat district, Khon Kaen province, in northeastern Thailand. There are 3 doctors, 36 nurses and 60 other personnel.

Ubolrat district, which the Ubolrat district hospital serves, is mostly rural with approximately 38,000 people in 65 villages. The hospital has become a place for comprehensive development in terms of service, research and training. The hospital serves its traditional role of treating patients and providing services for the sick. It is involved in health promotion activities, which include preventive health care and health education. It has also taken a number of community development initiatives and mainstreamed them into the health care agenda of the hospital. In addition it is a site for research activities on areas such as self-help health care, child diarrhea, and iron supplement tablets for expectant mothers. The hospital has become a place of study for groups of villagers, academics, high level administrators, and politicians. The hospital facilitates learning by providing a meeting place for individuals and groups to think and exchange ideas.

There are several divisions within the administration of the hospital, each of which oversees a different component of hospital activity. The Ubolrat Public Health Cooperation Committee (UPHCC) established in 1986, is responsible for the curative and preventive health care activities. It consists of the

members of the administrative board of the Ubolrat hospital and the Office of Public Health. Because this is a governmental body its activities are restricted by governmental regulations and mandates.

The Ubolrat Hospital Foundation (UHF) was established in 1993. It was created in order to enable the hospital to raise money and conduct in-house activities and programs that do not receive funds from the government.

The Sustainable Community Development Foundation (SCDF), founded in 1993, is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that operates in the community. The Foundation oversees community development activities sponsored by the hospital.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

For decades, medical professionals concentrated their energies on the curative aspects of healthcare. However, it soon became apparent that many diseases they were curing were easily preventable. Doctors, nurses and other health personnel were quickly ushered into preventive health care. Preventive health care includes immunizations, health education, disease surveillance, etc. Now we have entered a new phase of consciousness that calls on the health professional to be involved in much more than preventive and curative care. It is no longer sufficient to think that health of the community is simply a matter of improved medical services and more advanced technology. When the family does not have enough to eat, is overburdened by debt, or is falling apart from stress, no amount of medicines, iron supplements and immunizations can help. What is needed is a much more radical approach to health and well - being of the community, one that goes beyond distribution of medicine, providing immunizations and health education. The root causes of illness often lie in the economic and social conditions of the community. In order to ensure the well - being of society, the roots of the problems must be tackled.

Ubolrat district hospital aims to provide comprehensive health care by taking into account curative, preventive, and community development aspects of health care. Three principles outlined by Dr. Tadchai Mungkarndee form the main framework for the diverse activities of the hospital. The principles are as follows:

1. The sick are provided with medical attention close to home when needed, followed by an effective referral system if necessary.
2. People are protected from illness through good health promotion and disease prevention measures.
3. People are able to have good quality of life through sustainable development (which includes development of economy, environment, society, and culture).

Hospital activities aim to empower people so that they are self-reliant, and self- sufficient. This book provides a detailed description of the activities of

the hospital and its staff in curative, preventive, and community development activities.

CHAPTER 2: CURATIVE HEALTH CARE

Curative care is one of the primary responsibilities of hospitals and health personnel. This section will describe the different programs and initiatives taken by the Ubolrat Public Health Cooperation Committee (UPHCC) to improve patient service and care.

Patients who come to district hospitals can be categorized into three categories:

- The first group of patients consists of those who will recover with treatment, but will die or become disabled if they do not receive treatment. Examples of illnesses in this group include appendicitis, incarcerated hernias, meningitis, ectopic pregnancy, and pulmonary tuberculosis. Patients in this category have high priority in using hospital services because they benefit the most from the curative services available at the hospital. Presently, the health care system cannot provide guaranteed access to health care to patients in group one.
- The second group consists of patients who come to the hospital but will recover with or without treatment. Examples include colds and certain viral infections. We have found that these kinds of patients are visiting the hospital with greater frequency and now form the majority of the people who come to seek treatment at the hospital. This unnecessarily burdens the hospital staff and resources. Unfortunately, modern day medical and public health systems have fostered a culture that instructs people to seek care from medical professionals even for the slightest of ailments.

Because of disproportionate regional distribution of personnel and finances, rural people receive fewer doctors, often those with very little experience. Thus rural people lack confidence in the health care centers close to home and often bypass the services of primary health centers and community hospitals in order to go to a central or teaching hospital. Reliance on the district level hospital destroys methods of self-help and traditional healing when they can be used just as effectively in these instances.

- The third group consists of patients who will die with or without treatment. Examples include final stage cancer and AIDS, chronic liver failure, and brain death. Patients in this group are frequent visitors to the hospital and must be admitted as inpatients for long periods of time. Medical costs of treating these patients are rising and now form a very high percentage of overall expenditure of the hospital. In addition, quality of life of the patient is often drastically reduced. On many occasions, the family becomes bankrupt from the high costs of medical

treatment they have incurred. Often there is a dilemma between prolonging life and providing the patient with a dignified death. The health system incurs unaffordable expenses from the medical care costs of patients in group three.

Ubolrat hospital strives to overcome these shortcomings in the public health system in order to truly ensure the health and well-being of the community it serves. The hospital works very hard to provide the best possible care for all people, regardless of what category they fall in. The hospital team has come up with some innovative strategies to address some of the concerns mentioned above and constantly improve the quality of care at the hospital and in the community.

The hospital aims to provide guaranteed access to medical care for patients in the first group, reduce the reliance on health care centers for the patients in the second group, and reduce expenditures and provide a good life and a dignified death for the patients in the third group. In order to provide good quality care, UPHCC has taken a number of initiatives, some of which are as follows:

1. Encourage proper health care at home supported by an with effective referral system
2. Implement a system of medicine distribution to communities
3. Guarantee access to health care services
4. Develop effective means of record keeping
5. Develop service techniques
6. Develop efficient and good health personnel
7. Increase community participation in patient services

Proper health care at home

The UPHCC has adopted a number of measures that aim to reduce the dependence on district level hospitals for health care and encourage home health care. A 1992 home health care survey of all the communities in Ubolrat district found that only 40 % of the population seek treatment at health centers, private clinics, community hospitals, and private hospitals. The remaining 60% treat themselves at home or in the village, with 5 % using no medicine, 10% using medicinal herbs and traditional medicine, and 85 % using modern medicine. In this last group, 15% use medicines that are dangerous, for example, medicines that have passed their expiry date, medicines containing prednisolone, and a mixed assortments of unspecified drugs, or antibiotics. Every year the hospital receives many patients suffering from fixed drug eruptions, Steven Johnson's syndrome, or swellings resulting from the side effects of prednisolone. It is also clear that certain strains of bacteria in Ubolrat district have become resistant to tetracycline and co-trimoxazole. This situation has arisen because of the widespread misuse of antibiotics.

In order to solve these problems, the UPHCC has drawn up 3 operational policies that aim to improve the quality and safety of home health care.

Providing information for consumers concerning the use of medicines, distributing good quality medicines in the community, and developing the use of medicinal herbs and traditional medicine are the main priorities.

Provide information for consumers concerning the use of medicines

In the above-mentioned research work, public health workers chose 5 sample villages to discuss the use of medicine in the villages and inform villagers about the conditions that cannot be treated at home and necessitate consultation with the doctor or public health personnel. Using these discussions as a starting point, a handbook on the proper use of medicine, and self-help health care in times of illness was produced. This handbook enables consumers to treat themselves at home with greater confidence and visit the health centers and the hospital in good time when necessary. The working team has also used the handbook to provide information for groups of mothers with young children in other villages, groups of health volunteers, and groups of medicine retailers. The idea of good self-help health care is spreading across the district.

Distribute good quality medicines in the community

Between 1986 and 1992, the UPHCC carried out Ministry of Health policy by developing “medicine funds” to provide the population with good, safe, inexpensive medicines in sufficient quantities. The operational methods used in creating the medicine funds were the same all over the country. The Ministry of Health allocated 700 baht per village as a revolving fund for selling medicines. Part of the profits was to be used for paying dividends to members and remuneration for committee workers. Another portion of the profits was to be used for rural development. By 1992, only 8 funds out of an original total of 61 were still operating. The remainder had ceased operations. Some had transferred ownership to village health volunteers, some had sole owners, and others had been transferred to the headman or village chief.

Operating in the form of a village medicine funds was not effective because of low organizational cost-effectiveness, low dividends, and pay of less than 1 baht per day for the committee workers. The accounting system was also very complicated. Profits were very small and members cashed in their shares. The 8 funds that survived were able to do so because the committee changed the working methods and expanded the funds into all-purpose funds.

In practice the medicine funds were not successful, but the idea of distributing good, safe, inexpensive medicines in sufficient quantities into the community is still a good one. It can provide patients with medicines that are effective in treating certain conditions and can remove the complications that arise from using certain undesirable types of medicines. The working team reassessed the state of medicine distribution in various communities through the district. It found that, apart from the medicine funds of the village health volunteers, there were also general stores that sold medicine to consumers in the villages.

The UPHCC, with support from the Academic Department of the Food and Drug Administration, invited 30 interested representatives of medicine funds and general stores to hold ongoing monthly discussions to figure out a way to distribute sufficient quantities of good quality, safe, inexpensive medicines in the villages.

The discussions led to the creation of the District Pharmacy Association in 1996. The aim was to establish a research and development project covering medicine distribution in the community, and provide funding to reduce the cost of medicines by 25%. The fund enables the medicine funds and general stores to sell household medicines at the price set by the Association, while being competitive with medicines sold on the open market and making a profit. The primary desire of members is to help community members in times of sickness.

Funding from the Association provides for a quick and convenient retail system for members of the Association to purchase medicines. It also enables team workers to supervise the members and provide recommendations, train new members, cover transportation costs for members to attend regular meetings, and give prizes to stores that operate according to the regulations of the Association. It also sends workers into the villages to hold discussions and provide information to consumers whom general stores have identified as those who frequently purchase dangerous medicines. Finally, funding is also used to send the police to confiscate dangerous drugs if all positive measures have failed.

The methods detailed above have increased membership from 30 stores in 1992 to 203 stores as of September 30th, 1998. This represents 68.4 % of all stores and medicine funds in the district. It is clear that member stores sell smaller quantities of dangerous medicines than non-member stores.

Developing the use of medicinal herbs and traditional medicine

Western medicine has almost completely replaced traditional medicine in Thailand. Medical students learn almost nothing about medicinal herbs and traditional medicine. Traditional healers have not received any support from the government. The government has not funded the research and development of self-reliant methods like using medicinal herbs and traditional. Therefore the popularity of medicinal herbs and traditional medicine has gradually decreased, to the point where Thailand has given up the copyright on many medicinal herbs like *plao-noi*, which can be used to treat peptic ulcers.

In order to improve safe and effective home health care, UPHCC took on a project of developing the use of medicinal herbs and traditional medicine. In 1995, we invited 18 traditional healers for regular meetings every 2 weeks, to discuss the future of medicinal herbs and traditional medicine in Ubolrat district. These meetings led to the creation of the "Ubolrat District Traditional Healers' Association." Apart from the initial fortnightly meetings for the exchange of knowledge among the traditional healers and the staff of

Ubolrat hospital, the Association also invited well-known traditional healers from other areas to share their knowledge.

Traditional medicine activities in Ubolrat district have made rapid progress. Some of our programs consist of growing saplings for distribution to members and other interested people to use in reforestation, and planting herbal medicines. The Foundation started the Khum-kun Traditional Medicine Center, which has facilities for herbal saunas and traditional massage. Other activities of the Center include planning the production of various processed herbs in order to increase the popularity of medicinal herbs and traditional medicine in the future. It also serves as a center for the sale of products from various village initiatives. These include organic vegetables, processed fruit, silk, and cotton. This, we believe, will increase the self-reliance of the people of Ubolrat.

By providing information on the use of medicine to consumers, distributing good quality medicines, and developing herbal medicines, the Ubolrat hospital has improved the quality and reliability of self-help health care at home. In the case when home health care is not sufficient, patients are able to use hospital services and facilities. If the patient cannot be treated adequately at Ubol Rat Hospital, there are well--equipped ambulances ready to take them to central hospitals. With effective home healthcare and an efficient referral system, we have made great progress in providing good quality care to patients in time of real need.

System of medicine distribution to communities

In 1988, the UPHCC began by designating the Ubolrat Hospital dispensary as the central dispensary for the district, with health centers purchasing medicines from this central store. The goal was to enable patients suffering from the same complaint to obtain the same type and make of drug from both the health centers in their villages and the hospital. These measures were taken in order to popularize the use of health centers, to reduce the incidence of people bypassing the health centers in favor of visiting the hospital, and to reduce problems concerning drug shortages, out of date medicines, and overstocking of drugs in the health centers.

The pharmaceutical department sends a pharmacist every 6 months to check the health center dispensaries, to do an inventory, to take back any out of date medicines to the hospital, and to draw up a 1-year medicine procurement plan for each health center. A doctor assesses these plans to see whether any drugs have been ordered in unusually high quantities. At the monthly meeting, the doctor will provide information about the drugs to encourage reduction in the quantities of drugs ordered between inspection periods.

If any of the health centers have insufficient supplies they can borrow more from the hospital and return the medicines they borrowed in the next 6-month period. This method ensures that there are no drug shortages at the health centers and that medicine supplies are controlled efficiently.

Health centers must keep an exact, comprehensive, up to date register of medicines. The UPHCC uses a monitoring system where the number of patients is compared with the quantity of medicines used. If the correspondence between patients and medicines is irregular then the health center must accept responsibility for the difference and use its own budget to pay for the excess medicines.

In order to provide an incentive for the health centers to run well, the UPHCC has allocated welfare benefits (provided by the Government Pharmaceutical Organization (GPO)) for the health centers and the District Office of Public Health. The money is divided according to the number of personnel in each center and is use to provide welfare benefits for the workers.

Providing guaranteed access to health care services

The UPHCC has drawn up a comprehensive computerized register of the population of Ubolrat district in the Health Insurance Information Center, and has produced barcode identity cards to prevent unnecessary duplication of data. Information concerning patients who are eligible for welfare benefit cards, those who want to buy health cards, or those who are eligible for various types of hospital treatment is entered in the population database.

This system relies on the Village Health Volunteers to check for people who are living below the standard poverty line and issue welfare benefit cards. Anyone who has enough money is encouraged to buy a health card. Every month the Health Insurance Information Center issues a list of people whose health cards have passed their expiry date, or will do so within the next 2 months. Using this information, the health centers contact these people and sell new cards. This method provides ongoing, comprehensive health insurance coverage. In the near future all the citizens of Ubolrat district will have guaranteed access to health care for all.

Develop effective means of record keeping

Accurate record keeping is essential to running an efficient hospital. The UHPCC has allocated part of its research budget to support the health card system by giving the health centers nine baht per card if they send information concerning patient visits and services provided for registration at the Information Center. This money is used to provide welfare benefits for the health center workers.

The UPHCC also uses part of its research budget to support the collection of information concerning immunizations, antenatal, and postpartum check ups. The health centers are paid two baht for every case they record and report. They receive an additional ten baht every time that diabetics or children suffering from protein deficiency are entered on the register. As a result, in 1998, immunization coverage increased from 95 % to 99 %, comprehensive antenatal check ups increased from 92 % to 97 %, and check ups on diabetics referred to health centers for symptomatic treatment reached its maximum of one-hundred percent.

Develop service techniques

The UPHCC sends a working team to inspect each health center every 6 months. This team consists of representatives from each of the health centers, from the District Office of Public Health, and from Ubolrat hospital. The twice-yearly visits are to supervise service techniques and to judge the health center using the criteria for health center supervision designated by the above team and by the Provincial Office of Public Health. The health center that achieves good marks receives a shield and a cash prize from the UPHCC Research Fund. Also, the points awarded in the twice-yearly inspections are passed on to the District office of Public Health to be taken into consideration when awarding annual salary increases for health center workers. In addition, funds for developing basic services and for health card research have been distributed every year. The District Office of Public Health and each health center have received 20,000 baht per year for the last 6 years. These funds have been used to support the centers in improving facilities and creating new programs in order to serve the patients better.

Good quality health care workers

Equally important is the presence of good health care workers who can complement self-help health care at home and provide good care at the hospital. In order to encourage good health care workers to continue working in the Ubol Rat area, UPHCC sponsors joint working activities like the annual Village Health Volunteers Day, Sports Day, and annual training sessions for village health volunteers. Among other activities are reeducation sessions for health center workers, training for workers before they take up their posts, annual data processing, choosing children of Village Health Volunteers to receive education scholarships, an annual “ Outstanding Health Center” contest, and an annual Mahidol Day Festival to campaign on public health problems. Shared learning and working together to improve the health of the people has encouraged unity and resulted in higher rates of job satisfaction. This has helped retain good workers and develop a strong network of health care workers who support the home health care system effectively.

The Hospital Administrative Committee elects an academic committee every year that is in charge of personnel development. The hospital holds academic forums that aim to improve the knowledge base of staff. Both in-house and guest speakers are invited to speak at these forums. Hospital personnel also have the opportunity to undertake short-- term training outside the hospital. The Administrative Committee provides an annual budget of 100,000 Baht for these activities. Money is also available for hospital personnel to undergo long--term training outside the hospital if the Academic Committee approves. Personnel who wish to upgrade their education are also given the opportunity to do so. These opportunities help develop health personnel with the knowledge they need to provide good quality care for the patients.

Increasing community participation in patient services

Out - patient visits increased from 28,080 in 1986 to 47,000 in 1998. In-patient admissions increased from 3-5 patients per day in 1985 to 30-50 patients per day in 1998. In addition, in 1998 over 300 patients underwent surgery at the hospital. In 1987, there were not enough beds for in-patients at the hospital. Monks had to sleep in wards together with other patients. Hospital equipment was limited.

Ubolrat hospital discussed these problems with village headmen, village health volunteers, wealthy merchants and hospital in-patients. The response of the community in solving this problem was excellent. All parties worked together to raise funds. A fundraising drive in 1987 collected over 300,000 baht, which was used to convert an equipment store into a ward for monks. They continued to raise funds to buy medical equipment and to establish the Ubolrat Hospital Foundation (UHF) in order to provide better health services.

UHF funds are used to treat child protein deficiency, care for the elderly, and for monks who are sick. In addition, an annual secondary education scholarship is provided for children who show an interest in medical and health work, in the hope that these children will eventually return to work in the district. The Foundation also provides financial support for meetings and study tours of the Ubolrat District Civic Network.

The hospital draws on volunteers from the community to work at the hospital. These volunteers often sit at the information desk and help patients find their way around the hospital. They also help keep the hospital surroundings clean and pleasant. Additional duties include passing out herbal refreshments in the waiting room.

With the above measures, the quality of curative care at Ubolrat hospital has greatly improved. Patients in group two, who do not need to visit the hospital for treatment have been able to take care of themselves effectively at home. With the burden alleviated slightly, the hospital is able to put more of its energy towards patients in groups one and three. The Ubolrat Public Health Cooperation Committee is always looking for new ways to improve the quality of care patients receive at the hospital.

CHAPTER 3: PREVENTIVE CARE

More than seventy percent of patients who visit Ubol Rat Hospital suffer from easily preventable conditions such as peptic ulcers, dental caries, diarrhea, or injuries from accidents. While the public health system has been successful at overcoming many preventable diseases like polio and smallpox, it still has a long way to go in its health promotion and disease prevention activities.

Currently, there is a huge difference between government investment in health promotion/disease prevention activities and curative medical care in terms of personnel, budget, and resources. To exacerbate the lack of

funding, health promotion programs and activities are designed and implemented at the national level. This highly centralized process proves ineffective in the context of local society, culture, environment, and economics. Despite this, programs to improve health continue to be drawn up without the participation of the community they are meant for. As a result, most health promotion and disease prevention activities fail over and over again.

Good health and freedom from illness are essential for the well - being of any community. Preventive care should be one of the biggest priorities for healthcare establishments, especially those based in rural areas. However, it is much more difficult to achieve good health and freedom from sickness than it is to provide medical treatment after the illness has occurred. UPHCC has adopted and designed many programs that work towards health promotion and disease prevention. Participation from the community is stressed in all its activities. Following are short descriptions of UPHCC programs and efforts.

Nutrition

The village health volunteers keep surveillance on nutritional conditions by weighing children aged 0-5 years every 3 months. Teachers also weigh school children twice a year. Because of this two-fold method, coverage of weighing children aged 0-5 years has reached 98.8 %. In this district, children with protein-calorie deficiency at level 1 total 16%, and at level 2 total 1 %. There are no children suffering from protein-calorie deficiency at level 3. Protein supplements are provided for children aged 0-5 years who suffer protein-calorie deficiency at level 2 or 3.

The Ubolrat Hospital has established a system where village health volunteers, health centers, health promotion clinics and the outpatient department all undertake nutritional surveillance. If they detect a child suffering from protein-calorie deficiency at level 2 or 3, they refer the child for a physical checkup at the well-baby clinic¹. The parents also receive nutritional education for 3 months, once a month, and protein supplement in the form of cartons of milk (90 200 cc. cartons of milk are distributed for 3 months). The hospital issues a referral form and evaluation form for the health center to send back to the hospital for assessment. The health centers are paid 10 baht for every evaluation form that they return. After 6 months the child is checked again. If the weight is normal, or has improved to level 1, the child is discharged from the clinic. If the child still has protein-calorie deficiency at level 2 or 3, then he/she is readmitted to the well-baby clinic.

As a result of these operational methods, 46.5 % of children with protein-calorie deficiency at level 2 or 3 have improved to level 1 or no longer have any deficiency. These methods have also meant that the incidence of

¹ The health promotion department of the hospital holds a well baby clinic once a week for vaccinations, weighing for nutritional surveillance, and health education.

children with deficiencies at level 2 or 3 has been reduced from 7 % in 1986 to only 1 % in 1997. We are now undertaking research into ways of helping children with level 1 protein-calorie deficiency and pregnant mothers who have a low Vallop's Curve Score.

Sanitation

Sanitation is of vital importance in reducing the number of disease vectors like mosquitoes, flies, and rats. It also helps provide people with improved physical and mental health. Living in an environment free from dust and bad odors helps to reduce the incidence of respiratory and skin diseases. The six health-centers in the district and Ubolrat hospital altogether receive over 100,000 respiratory and skin disease related consultations per year.

In order to reduce the incidences of these diseases, the health centers try to work together to provide clean workplaces and increase consciousness of sanitary issues in people's homes. The health staff also facilitates various groups which work to create a shared vision of homes free from disease and worth living in, and organize campaigns for destroying breeding grounds of disease vectors in times of infection.

In addition, the UPHCC has helped to campaign for the provision of latrines, and achieved 100 % coverage in 1996. It campaigns on an ongoing basis to ensure that using latrines becomes a way of life for the people of Ubolrat district. The UPHCC has also provided a system of loans with funds from the Provincial Sanitation Fund to buy large water containers and food cupboards at a cheap price. People now have clean drinking water, which reduces the incidence of gastrointestinal tract disorders.

Disease surveillance

The UPHCC uses patients who come for treatment at the health centers and Ubolrat hospital as an effective base for disease surveillance. As soon as the first case of dengue hemorrhagic fever, dysentery, or severe diarrhea is encountered, the hospital assumes that there has been an outbreak. A working team, which consists of workers from the health centers, the District Office of Public Health, and Ubolrat Hospital, in conjunction with village health volunteers, immediately undertakes disease control activities.

The UPHCC invites various groups, such as student leaders, teachers, and health volunteers, to assist in disease surveillance. It holds monthly meetings for the Chiefs of Village Health Volunteer Associations, where reports of disease outbreaks can be shared between members. The Public Health Newsletter acts as an information reception point and provides ongoing knowledge concerning disease surveillance and protection.

In addition, every year before the new school term, teachers who have special responsibility for child health undergo refresher courses. Teachers are able to isolate children with communicable diseases by keeping them at home for an appropriate period of time, and are able to control disease vectors in the schools.

The above-mentioned methods of disease surveillance and control have led to a clear reduction in the incidence of local communicable diseases. For example, the incidence of Dengue Hemorrhagic Fever in Ubolrat district has been reduced from 350 cases per 100,000 people in 1992 to 70 in 1997.

Immunization promotion

The UPHCC has drawn up a computerized register of children aged 0-5 years who must receive a program of immunizations. The register includes both children who come for treatment at the hospital and children who receive service at the health centers. Since 1992, information has been entered on the hospital health information database. A list of children who missed their immunization appointments is automatically generated every month. Using this information, health centers and the hospital health promotion team contact parents of children in their area under their responsibility in order to ensure that they come in to receive immunization. Records concerning health center service provision and follow-up contact work are maintained.

The coverage of various immunization services for each health center is presented at the monthly meetings of the UPHCC and the rate of coverage is one of the indicators used in deciding which health center will receive the "Outstanding Health Center" award. Immunization coverage in Ubolrat district increased from 68 % in 1992 to 95 % in 1995 and 99 % in 1998. Total immunization guarantees the protection of child rights in terms of safe survival. Village health volunteers and health centers that achieve 100 % immunization coverage within a specified time also receive a prize. Because of the depth and breadth of these activities in Ubolrat district, there have been no children aged 0-5 years suffering from TB, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis or measles.

Maternal health

Since 1992, the UPHCC has used a computerized register similar to the one used for immunizations to cover maternal health. By keeping such accurate records, the number of pregnant women who received all four antenatal checkups increased from 73 % in 1992 to 92 % in 1995 and 97 % in 1998. The coverage of Tetanus immunizations increased from 85 % in 1992 to 94 % in 1995 and 99.7 % in 1998.

In 1999, the UPHCC incorporated maternal health information with the barcode system and organized village health volunteers and team workers to make monthly checks in the villages for newly pregnant mothers. These methods will enable the hospital team to calculate comprehensively the rates of spontaneous and induced abortions, infant mortality, and maternal mortality. These rates can then be used as health indicators for the district.

Good maternal health care has meant that in Ubolrat district the infant mortality rate is 8.2 per 1,000 live births, compared to national average of 12.2. Currently, no children are disabled because of Syphilis, and no children under six years of age have died from tetanus. There have been no maternal or infant deaths during childbirth. Caesarian Sections were used

in only 1-3 % of all births (this includes surgical referrals to other hospitals). Because great importance has been placed on providing comprehensive health education concerning birth control to new mothers, the rate of birth control reached 89 % in 1998. Criminal abortions have been reduced from 10 -20 patients in 1986 to 0 -1 patient between 1995 and 1998.

Dental health

In 1990 self-help health care research in Ubolrat district showed that dental health problems ranked number two out of all health care problems in the district. The Ubolrat district dental health care team adopted a number of measures that have helped to reduce dental health problems. Such measures include providing health education for student leaders, teachers, pregnant women, and volunteers from various groups, providing fluoride for target groups, establishing dental clinics both during and outside normal working hours, and holding dental clinics at health centers, schools, and villages.

Mental health

Adolescents and the elderly are the two groups that suffer the most from mental health problems in Ubolrat district. Adolescents want to experiment, to express themselves, and be individuals. The elderly commonly have problems concerning stress, insomnia, and having no one to look after them.

The UPHCC has tried to create civic networks at village, *tambon*, and district levels to enable relevant groups such as community leaders, teachers, and others who are interested, to meet and discuss problems of mental health in the community. Discussions are meant to create knowledge and understanding about the problems of adolescents. Various groups have set up child and youth camps, and now facilitate children's groups. The aim is to enable children to think and to express themselves in a positive manner.

The UPHCC also facilitates interest groups for the elderly by providing a space for the group to meet, inviting guest speakers, and organizing study tours to various successful groups of elderly people. Various activities of the group include an annual Elderly Citizens Day, an annual general meeting, and organizing representatives to volunteer at the hospital. The group also mobilizes funds to assist in funeral costs for the elderly. Each member pays 10 baht to the family of any member who dies. Collectively, the family receives over 17,000 baht to assist in funeral costs, thereby reducing the financial burden for the family and enabling the elderly to have a dignified death.

The group also has funds available to develop welfare benefits for the members, and to organize self-help health care activities. In 1998, the group also decided to start a savings group to provide funds to help in times of necessity and to assist members and relatives in developing their careers. The savings fund has plans for steady expansion. All of these activities aim to provide mental and spiritual support for the elderly so that they can lead a happy life and have a dignified death.

Exercise

It is a well-known fact that suitable daily exercise leads to good health and prevents illness. However less than 5 % of the people in Ubolrat district exercise regularly. The UPHCC organizes an annual run on Mahidol Day, using donations from shops and stores as prizes. The number of children, health volunteers, and target group members who participate has increased from 1,000 in 1986 to over 7,500 in 1998. In addition, the Ubolrat district public health care team holds an annual run up the mountain to the large Buddha statue overlooking the Ubolrat dam. As a result of organizing ongoing activities and providing knowledge concerning exercise, the number of people in Ubolrat district undertaking various forms of regular exercise is steadily increasing.

Consumer protection

The UPHCC has developed its network of village medicine funds and general stores into a Medicine Retail Store Association. The initial target was to sell good quality, inexpensive medicines and to rely on the good public relations achieved to develop consumer protection for other retail goods. The UPHCC also provides information on consumer protection to various groups such as student leaders, teachers, community leaders, women's group leaders and monks. These groups can then work together to keep a check on problematic products. Cooperating with forums to develop a self-sufficient economy has meant that the use of chemicals in the agricultural production cycle has been reduced, and organic fruits and vegetables are now on sale more often. This is of great benefit to consumers and allows for a healthier community.

Accident prevention

The UPHCC has cooperated with various government bodies, such as the Ubolrat district government headquarters, the Ubolrat district police station, and the Safety Department of the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand, no.2 region, to create a Traffic Accident Control and Prevention Committee (TACPC). The UPHCC and the TACPC work together to provide safety information, stop drunken dancing on *Songkran* day, organize a one-way traffic system, and improve the condition of the road surface.

The number of accidents in Ubolrat district, a popular tourist area, has been visibly reduced since 1995. In addition, regular meetings for relevant groups and an annual accident simulation drill, stresses the importance of accident prevention. For example, the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand, no.2 region, forbids people who do not wear crash helmets from riding motorcycles in the grounds of Ubolrat dam. The Ubolrat district police also arrest or fine motorcyclists who do not wear crash helmets and car drivers who do not fasten their safety belts.

AIDS

AIDS has become a major social problem in Ubolrat district. The first case occurred in 1988. By the end of 1998 a total of 138 people had been diagnosed, and 28 have died, including 4 children. The Ubolrat district AIDS Control and Prevention Committee, chaired by the Ubolrat District Chief

includes various government department heads as committee members, has created a unified plan to fight this social problem. The plan includes AIDS education, raising funds for care and treatment of HIV patients, and creating network and support groups for people living with HIV. The Monks' Anti-AIDS Network organized a fund raising drive in 1997. This raised over 100,000 baht to be used towards providing assistance for HIV patients and spreading knowledge about AIDS.

The UPHCC, in conjunction with the SCDF, invites HIV patients to meet and discuss, learn about self-help health care, practice meditation, and find work of a suitable kind. Such work includes planting saplings, growing and watering trees, weeding and so on. The UPHCC also provides information about integrated farming to HIV patients. Farming this way enables them to generate income to pay school expenses and establish savings funds for their children. The patients now have hope for the future. Many have gained weight and now have enough self-confidence to act as resource people for others suffering with the same disease. Most important of all, they have friends, they are happy, and they have positive goals in life.

Health education

Health education is an important component of any preventive care program. Health education happens at many levels within the health care system. First, every patient who consults the doctor, contacts the health promotion office, or is admitted as an inpatient receives individual health counseling. Group education is also done in waiting rooms and in-patient wards. Health information is also relayed over the hospital intercom system everyday. There is a monthly newsletter covering public health issues put out by the Health Education and Public Relations Committee in the Hospital. The newsletter is distributed to volunteers, target groups, and hospital visitors.

The UPHCC emphasizes group health education by targeting representatives of various interest groups. The various groups include students, health teachers, community leaders, mothers with young children, monks and novices, and village health volunteers.

When the representatives from these groups have gained proper understanding they can use their new knowledge to modify their lifestyles to live a healthier life. They can also persuade their friends and relatives to follow their example in living healthy lives. This system of dissemination of information through representatives of groups is very effective given the large population the hospital has to work with.

The UPHCC attaches great importance to mothers with young children because these mothers have special responsibility for providing ongoing care and attention for young children. There are monthly meetings in the villages to find ways of development that lead to improved child health. For example, the mother's group in Kam-pla-lai village, apart from uniting to create

secondary incomes from making sweets and weaving, has been successful in totally removing the problem of child protein calorie deficiency.

The UPHCC uses village public address systems, exhibitions, and health campaigns on various festival occasions such as the annual Ubolrat District Rocket Festival, the Mahidol Day Festival, the Village Health Volunteers' Sports Day, and the Civil Servants' Sports Day. This kind of health education, in conjunction with bringing various target groups together continuously, enables the community to receive necessary health information and creates awareness of public health problems.

Village Health Volunteers

Village Health Volunteers play a key role in preventive and public health work. Village health volunteers help correct misguided perceptions of health care while disseminating useful health information. The village health volunteers are also responsible for public health surveillance activities--weighing children, identifying pregnant mothers, reporting disease outbreaks, etc. They serve as an important link between the hospital and the community.

There is an annual Village Health Volunteers' Sports Day, which encourages cooperation between public health workers and village health volunteers. There is an annual selection and rewarding of outstanding village health volunteers at village, *tambon*, and district levels. There is also an educational scholarship for a child or grandchild of the village health volunteers, who is interested in public health work. Village health volunteers also receive welfare benefits in the form of free hospital care for their families and help with funeral costs. As a result, the 741 Village health volunteers of Ubolrat district are highly motivated and are strongly united with the UPHCC team.

The disease prevention and health promotion activities of the UPHCC are diverse. Together, they have been successful in working towards the aim of better health and good quality of life for the people of Ubolrat.

CHAPTER 4: DEVELOPMENT AND HEALTH

The connection between health and development is complex, but it is an important one to understand. Often, when the words "health" and "development" go together, one thinks of low infant mortality, total immunization, and a well nourished population with few infectious diseases. However, there is another side to health in developing countries that requires careful examination. Because of development, Thailand has advanced leaps and bounds in terms of some health issues like infant mortality and maternal health. At the same time, the health of the population has also suffered greatly from the environmental pollution and economic instability that has been brought about by the rapid onslaught of development.

The following chapter attempts to outline the development path Thailand has taken and the impacts it has had on health. The next chapter describes what we have done in Ubolrat district to overcome these health problems caused by development.

Fifty years ago, Thai people were probably the happiest people in the world. People used to greet each other with great regard and love with expressions like 'Where have you been?' or 'Have you eaten yet?' Mutual concern and love for fellow human beings can still be seen in the traditions that have been passed down through the ages.

In the past, Thai people loved and respected the environment. They worshipped the soil, the water, the rice, and the fish as their mother, and compared the wind and the trees to gods. People by word and deed, showed their love and respect for, and gratitude towards, nature. Thailand, located in the most fertile seven percent of the earth's surface was gifted with good soil, plenty of water, fertile forests, fish in the rivers, rice in the fields, and an unending supply of shrimps, shellfish, crabs and fish. Thai society was healthy and happy because Thai people in the past understood self-sufficiency and conservation of the environment. They appreciated the gifts nature gave them.

In the last fifty years, things have changed drastically. Following the reconstruction of Europe after World War II many formerly colonized countries gained independence, and the world entered the development era. The so - called development fueled by western powers and funded by international financial institutions like the IMF and the World Bank, seeped into national development policies of many countries. Thailand took on the development projects and policies prescribed by these financial institutions with full force.

Thailand's rapid development in the last 5 decades has had both positive and negative impacts on the rural communities that Ubolrat Hospital serves. Better access to education and formal health care is one of the advantages. However, it has severely effected the environment, society, and culture of Thai people.

Through its development projects and policies, Thailand became deeply involved in the world economy where everything is measured in terms of its monetary value. The focus of development activities has been on building industry and exporting raw materials. Environment and social capital are being converted into monetary terms to keep the GNP engine producing higher numbers. This resulted in the massive destruction of forestland in Thailand. The forest cover in the country has been reduced drastically from 48% in 1950 to 18% today. Trees are being cut down to be traded for foreign currency that will be used to buy sill more destructive technology. For the last fifty years, foreign companies with cooperation of the Thai government have been looting the country of its environmental capital. This has had

adverse effects on rural Thai society that traditionally depended on the forest.

The forest can be called “the poor man’s supermarket” because it provides food in the form of crops, vegetables, fruit, shrimps, shellfish, crabs and fish, as well as cotton and silk to make clothing. There are branches for firewood, timber for housing and furniture, and herbal remedies to treat illness. In addition, branches, leaves, and animal remains, which pile up continuously, become first-class nutrients for the trees, making the use of chemical fertilizer unnecessary.

But with the onslaught of logging industry, the poor have lost their source of livelihood. The forests, wild animals, minerals, soil fertility, and mountains have been swept out of the countryside and into large cities and foreign countries. With the forests destroyed, the poor find themselves in many difficulties, not only because they lack the four basic necessities of life (food, clothing, shelter and medicine), but also because they must face natural disasters, including floods and drought which follow deforestation. In addition, toxic wastes from industries are released into the air and the water killing off fish and polluting water to be used for irrigation.

To exacerbate the problems of the poor, the government has initiated many farming programs that focus on monocropping, the products of which are used primarily for export. Many farmers have been encouraged to turn their entire land holdings over to heavily promoted exportable cash crops. Widespread adoption, encouraged by government incentives and subsidies and by promises of high returns, has changed the face of the countryside. Traditional farming methods that emphasize subsistence--growing a variety of food, herbs, and other useful plants for consumption, selling only the surplus--are going extinct. Cash cropping makes farmers reliant on the financial returns from their harvest to meet their own dietary needs and basic needs. The food no longer comes from the farms, but from the markets. This increases the uncertainty of obtaining a good balanced diet and maintaining good health.

Contrary to their expectations, many farmers have found the profits from cash cropping to be far from certain. First, cash cropping, unlike subsistence farming, is a high investment business. When the government promotes a particular crop, the market can easily become flooded, depressing prices. Second, intensive farming destroys biodiversity, and soil fertility. Droughts and pests can decimate an entire crop leaving the farmer with nothing. They rely on even larger doses of chemical fertilizers to maintain soil fertility and boost their yields and chemical pesticides to keep pests away. After one bad harvest, the agrochemical bills alone can be enough to push many farmers into a cycle of rising debt that eventually becomes impossible to pay off through farming activities. Many farmers are left struggling to survive in an increasingly centralized, even globalized economy, that their experience, traditions and education have ill equipped them to deal with. The rise of commercialism, the flood of information, the

growing influence of the central government, and the increasing dependency on a monetary economy in which the farmers often find themselves among the poorest--have effectively paralyzed many communities

Farmers and poor people all over rural Thailand are finding that they have nothing to eat despite their hard work. After diligent years of work, they are still trapped in an endless cycle of debt. Poverty, debt, and growing unattractiveness of the farming lifestyle have led to large-scale labor migration. Migrant labor fuels the massive growth of infrastructure in Bangkok. The father, the head of the household, has to migrate to sell his labor in the big city, Bangkok or even aboard, to prevent his family from starving. Many people sell their children as factory labor, and their wives and daughters as prostitutes.

Labor migration has profound implications for children and for the wider aspects of community development. Elderly grandparents are forced to take over the duties and responsibilities of the stronger and more able generation below them, particularly working the farm, and raising the young grandchildren. Overburdened and only receiving financial support from their children, they are often unable to provide early childhood stimulation and nutrition needed for proper growth of children. The problems are exasperated by the rising rates of divorces and family breakdowns among migrant workers. The rates of suicide and murder are among the top ten in the world every year. The trade in alcohol is wide and open; amphetamines and other narcotics are sold everywhere. Crime figures increase at an alarming rate; lives and property are no longer secure.

The change in lifestyle brought about by inappropriate rural development brings with it several health risks. Debt and overwork among the elderly put the villagers under psychological stress. Improper use of agricultural chemical leads to blood poisoning. In a recent survey, the blood of over 20 % of farmers tested in Khon Kaen showed dangerously high levels of the most popular agro-chemicals. Debt-laden families, reliant on their depleted cash reserves to buy food allow themselves to become malnourished. Alcohol and drug abuse is also prevalent for a number of reasons, among them boredom during the long periods between growing seasons and influence of urban culture. Under these combined pressures, many rural villages lose their sense of community, the implicit social contract that traditionally provided a network of mutual support, a safety net and a base from which to plan the future. They also lose self-reliance--in terms of material resources and more importantly, in the way they approach problems and the running of their own lives. With this, they lose an invaluable resource for their own development.

In the past, the political, governmental, and education system have been used in attempts to solve social crises. But it appears that all three systems have many problems and are approaching a dead end. The government system is highly centralized with many rules and regulations, resulting in low efficiency; the budget is not continuous, because it is allocated year by

year. Local government officers have no decision making power, lack confidence, and feel that it is better to do nothing because it is less risky. There is no system of public scrutiny and the organizations responsible for auditing are not efficient, resulting in cancerous corruption infecting the government system.

The political system, which should be a source of hope, is suffering from an ongoing crisis of faith because there is a system of patronage and extensive vote - buying. Politicians then try to recover their investment in every way possible. As can be read every day from the front pages of the newspaper, there is a lot of political in-fighting in order to secure the maximum private benefit. Even worse, there have been many coups during the last 60 years, resulting in a lack of political stability. People cannot rely on the government system to improve their quality of life and environmental conditions.

The educational system, which should aim to improve quality of life and environmental conditions for Thai people, is in the same condition as the governmental and political systems. Education aims to satisfy the requirements of the industrial and service sectors, and attaches less importance to the agricultural sector, which is in fact the true foundation of Thai society. The philosophy of promoting only the truly gifted students, instead of helping people to achieve their full potential according to their individual ability, fails many children every year. Many primary school children, who cannot study at high school, must leave their fields and join the massed ranks of servants, waitresses, factory workers and laborers. This means that very few people return to help develop rural areas. Rural areas are seen as worthless and people flood out of the countryside both out of necessity and in order to find a better source of income, following the pattern laid down by the governmental and educational systems. This type of educational system only serves to worsen the crisis of thought, the environment, and the poor.

The economic crisis of 1997 was a turning point in modern Thai history. Thailand had to sacrifice more than 1 trillion baht of national reserves with no hope of recovery. The value of the baht decreased rapidly, increasing the value of private and public sector debt from 2.8 trillion to 4 trillion baht. Thailand has essentially become a slave of international financial institutions like the IMF. This downturn of the seemingly everlasting and unstoppable economic boom is sufficient evidence that this form of economic development is not sustainable. Thai society today is in a very dangerous predicament, not only because the national economy is in a critical condition, but also because the environment and society, which were once strong sources of capital are deteriorating. As a result, the health and well being of the population is also deteriorating rapidly. The political and educational system has failed to solve the problem. We can predict that in the near future, if we don't use wisdom and good management to return to the real strengths of Thai society, future generations will face extreme difficulties.

CHAPTER 5: SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The genesis of the idea

Amidst the great crises attacking farmers nationwide, resulting in broken families, shattered communities, and loss of self-reliance, is a group of successful farmers who use a different way of thinking to face the strong tide of materialism with confidence. They use local wisdom and appropriate indigenous technology to overcome their problems and enable themselves and their families to have a better quality of life. These local sages are scattered in various provinces throughout Thailand. They are willing to spread their ideas and achievements among workers and farmers who are interested in a holistic approach to achieving sustainable development.

*Paw*² Boon-tan Ketchompu from Dong-bang village started out as a skilled farmer and thirty years ago. After adopting government promoted activities, he worked hard for more than 20 years growing rice, cassava, sugarcane, and other cash crops only to find that the more he grew, the poorer he became, until finally he found himself in debt. At certain times, he had to work as hired labor to pay back his debt. He became very thin, both because he was unable to eat and because he had nothing to eat. He was ill very frequently, and could not sleep because he worried about his debt. Society would not accept him because people feared he would try to borrow money or threaten them when he was drunk and depressed.

Paw Boon-tan had the opportunity to join the Well – Child Survival Project³ at Dong-bang village. This project stressed group forming, and facilitated learning through discussions between group members and sponsoring study tours to many locations. The aim was to help members understand concepts of self-reliance and the benefits of bio-diversity.

He radically changed his way of thinking, from working as hired labor to digging his own ponds to raise fish and growing all his basic daily provisions. Two years after joining the project, he utilized all his land to grow food, and produced a large surplus to give to friends and relatives, and to sell at the market. His income gradually increased through the sale of fish, chickens, pigs, cows, vegetables and fruit. Merchants came to the farm to buy, so he could set the price himself. His huge debts were gradually reduced, and cleared after five years.

Now he has a pension in terms of savings with the village saving-group. He has also planted 2,000 timber and fruit trees, which are now like a small fertile forest around his farm. Environmental conditions have improved because he uses organic fertilizer. He grows a wide variety of trees, which make his soil more productive and the air cleaner. He also has better water resources, both in terms of quality and quantity. He shows love and affection for all kinds of animals and for the people who come to ask for

²Paw is the Thai word for “father.”

³ This was is an NGO health development project funded by the World Vision Foundation of Thailand.

fruits and vegetables. He is healthy and happy, in terms of the body, mind, society, and spiritual consciousness. He achieved all this in only seven years. *Paw* Boon-tan is not the only example. Many others have shared similar experiences. By breaking free of ideologies imposed by national and international institutions, local wisdom practitioners have found an innovative path to happiness.

There is no lack of wisdom in Thailand. Mahayoo Sunthorntai has practiced and created concepts of natural agriculture which emphasize self-sufficiency first, with any surplus for sale. He has gone against the tide of modern agriculture, which stresses production only for money and for sale in the market. After 40 years, Mahayoo has demonstrated that his techniques not only lead to self-sufficiency and a better environment but also provide happiness in all aspects, whether they be physical, mental, social, or spiritual.

Other examples of this local wisdom include *Paw* Tong-on, who has accumulated vast knowledge about medicinal herbs and effective traditional medicine, and *Paw* Suttinun Pradchayapreut who has collected a great deal of knowledge about selecting local species of trees to be planted in farms. Senator Wibul Chemchaerm can connect ideas about natural agriculture with macro - economics, politics, the environment, society, and culture.

The *E-to-Noi* group of *Paw* Pai Soisaklang in Sra-kun village is yet another example that shows how innovative thinking can be used to solve health care problems and lead to better quality of life. This group uses a seven-fold Buddhist philosophy called *A-pa-ri-ha-ni-ya-tham*. This consists of

- Regular meetings.
- All group activities must be carried out together.
- Members must abide by majority decision.
- Members must accept and respect the elderly.
- Members must take care of and help the under privileged in society, such as children, women, the disabled, and the elderly.
- Members must promote and preserve tradition and culture.
- Members must help to promote and encourage Buddhism.

More than 80% of the villagers in Sra-kun village are the members of the *E-to Noi* group. All members have social welfare benefits such as health care and better child education. Members share mutual affection, have a better quality of life and improved environmental conditions. They have well - being in terms of the body, the mind, society and spiritual consciousness.

The *E-to Noi* group has established a traditional massage and herbal medicine center, which is now famous throughout Thailand. The cost of running the center is small in comparison to the existing sub-district and district level public health care system. It is self-reliant and does not depend on technology alone. It is an alternative that is capable of looking after all three types of patients described in chapter 2.

This group helps solve economic problems by reducing investments, increasing income, reducing debt, and creating savings. It also enables villagers to increase their environmental capital in the form of water resources, for daily consumption and for agriculture, soil fertility, through the use of natural fertilizer, and most importantly, large trees, both fruit trees and many types of local hardwood trees. This people's organization ensures that the concepts and activities it runs by are passed on to future generations. There is a children's group in the village that operates on similar principles.

This *E-to-Noi* group has also joined with the network of Sateuk district, Buriram province, to create the Northeast Community School. This is a community learning center that helps to spread the concepts and philosophies of the network very quickly. Many other villagers that have benefited from this learning and networking.

The work of *E-to Noi* group, under the leadership of *Paw* Pai for almost 30 years, shows the power of strong people organizations. The coordination between *Paw* Pai and government development workers, NGO workers, academics, business people, and the mass media shows the power of civic society in solving problems. When all these civic groups join together, they create a horizontal network that is connected with the vertical systems of government, education, and religion, thus resulting in a structure that is flexible but strong, like a fishing net that can lift many heavy things. The civic group structure, in which each member is self reliant, can grow into a strong civic society. The stronger the society, the better the health and well-being of the population.

History of SCDF

The case studies above show that the quality of life and the environment can be improved in a holistic manner. The ideas and inspiration for creating the Sustainable Community Development Foundation (SCDF) came from the above mentioned examples and many others that followed. SCDF was first started under the leadership of Dr.Werapan Supanchaimart⁴, then deputy director of Khon Kaen hospital,

SCDF is a non-governmental organization based in three district hospitals in Khon Kaen province, which seeks to help poor rural communities become self reliant. SCDF believes that in order to achieve sustainability and self-reliance, communities must take charge of their own development and to do that effectively, they must be continually learning. SCD activities are thus geared towards stimulating and supporting group learning processes.

4 Dr.Werapan Supanchaimart has received awards for "Outstanding Rural Doctor" from the faculty of Medicine of Siriraj Hospital and "Good Thai Citizen" from the Tarnnamjai Foundation.

Beyond Disease Prevention and Health Promotion: Health for All through Sustainable Community Development

The goal of the SCD Foundation is to expand people's organizations and their networks, which consist of government development workers, NGO workers, academics, business people, and the media, in order to learn and think together about how to solve the problems of Thai society. Only by solving the larger problems that confront society, can we achieve good health and quality of life. The work of SCD Foundation emphasizes developing people according to their potential, and creating strong community organizations by facilitating learning on approaches towards self-reliance through brainstorming with groups and study tours.

SCDF has its roots in two earlier projects--The Well Child Survival Project, and the Self-Care Development Program, both of which aimed to improve the health of the population. With a change of leadership, these programs converged under the name of the Sustainable Community Development Program in 1993 with financial support from the World Vision Foundation (WVF). However, the impressive macro-economic figures for Thailand between 1993-94 meant that many projects that received foreign aid no longer received aid. Finally in 1995, SCD was established as a foundation in order to obtain charitable funds to make up for the lack of funding from WVF. Funding provides financial support in strengthening community organizations and facilitating learning processes for the civic groups.

From 1994 to 1996, Ubolrat District Public health Coordination Committee and The SCD Project, relying on funding from the World Vision Foundation of Australia, hired 3 NGO development workers to work with public health workers in 6 villages in Ubolrat district. Emphasis was placed on strengthening learning processes at both individual and group levels, by organizing monthly village-level forums for all members and monthly district level forums for natural leaders from various villages.

From 1995 to 1996, UNICEF provided funding for learning and for activities in strengthening child rights in schools in the project area, with each school receiving approximately 20,000 baht per year. However, from our activities, we found that it was impossible to solely focus on child welfare without addressing the larger problems at hand. Issues of child rights would get addressed in the process of tackling other issues.

From 1997 to 1998, replacing the funding from World Vision Foundation, UNICEF provided funding to create forums at village, district, and province levels. Thus people forums have been established and various networks have been created. The "Ruam-Jai-Chao-Khon-kaen Cooperative", a savings cooperative which operates through male community leaders; "the Mit-Mai-Fai-Ngam Women's Group", run by female community leaders, Teachers' Network, Public Health Workers' Network, Village Philosophers' Network of Khon Kaen Province, and the Northeast Region Village Philosophers' Network are a few examples.

SCDF in Action

The SCD has no model action plan for community development. It does not set development goals. The essence of its working model is to develop individual and community thinking, to foster a dynamic learning process which implants itself in the fabric of community life and restores self-reliance.

The SCD selects cooperating villages according to three criteria: they must be agricultural villages, there must be no significant conflict in the community which could jeopardize cooperation between villagers, and they should be at a level of poverty where they need help, but still have enough resources to effect change.

Once the project team has selected a village, a volunteer will visit a few times and hold informal discussions to get a rough picture of the wants and needs of the community. During this time, the "natural leaders" will emerge. They will serve as the core group of people the hospital volunteers work with. In the more formal process, villagers sit down to discuss the problems in their community and their ideal vision for the future. They will also identify what kinds of information and knowledge they need in order to be able to meet their goals. The hospital volunteer facilitates these meetings and provides resources to fill these knowledge gaps.

Creating knowledge and facilitating learning

Having true knowledge leads to mutual self-reliance. One must have knowledge and understanding in order to adapt principles to ever-changing technology, to make them suitable for communities to become mutually self-reliant.

Knowledge and learning can come from studying various media resources, such as the monthly Public Health Care Newsletter, which contains material about changes in aspects of health or the network. The monthly Northeast Region Village Philosophers' newsletter, which provides knowledge from the brainstorming sessions of the Northeast Region Village Philosophers' Network, is another source of learning. The Kum-koon Magazine, which reports network knowledge, ideas, and progress, (issued every 3 months) can also serve as a source of knowledge.

The Ubolrat District Public Health Coordination Committee, the Ubolrat Hospital Foundation, and the SCD Foundation have used many approaches to encourage group learning. The first way is to facilitate monthly meetings for intra - and inter-group learning exchange, using the seven-fold Buddhist philosophy of A-pari-ha-ni-ya-tam.

SCD seeks to fill in the gaps of missing knowledge through study tours as chosen by group members. SCD organizes and financially supports tours to communities around the country that have encountered similar problems and have successfully dealt with the problems. Study tours give the villagers a chance to exchange ideas and learn from each other.

The creation of knowledge that leads to mutual self-reliance is the most pressing task facing Thailand, if it is avoid irreparable damage. This task must undoubtedly fall to village philosophers, community leaders, and civic groups that are interested in and believe in such an approach. In order to increase the base of knowledge, the Ubolrat District Civic Group has set up some urgent research and development work, as follows:

- R and D work to expand the learning network for self-reliance.
- R and D work to organize water resources.
- R and D work to improve soil fertility through organic materials.
- R and D on local species of crops, plants, and trees that are resistant to diseases and drought, and give to good yield.
- R and D work on local species of animals and fish that are resistance to disease and drought, and give a good yield.

The Groups and Networks

Groups and networks in the village, *tambon* and district levels are meant to restore the atmosphere of cohesion and collaboration in the community. Part of the activity of the SCD involves facilitating group formation, and providing financial support for the activities of these groups. The Integrated Farming and Environmental Protection Network, the Women's Network, the Traditional Healer's Network, the Monks for Good Environment Network, the Elderly Citizens' Network, the Health Volunteer's Network, the Health Personnel Network, and the Village Headmen's Network are all examples of the kinds of groups that SCD supports. Further, all these groups send representatives to form the Ubolrat district Civic Group. The civic groups, as mentioned before, are instrumental in solving the problems society faces. Working through people's organizations, networks and civic groups is the key to achieving good health and good quality of life in a sustainable manner.

Following is a short description of each group and its activities.

Integrated Farming and Environmental Protection Network

In 1993, the World Vision Foundation of Australia provided funding to create a network of people interested in learning about self-reliance, with the ultimate aim of having good quality of life and improved environmental conditions. This network involved six villages in Ubolrat district, namely Kamplalai, Kudchiangmee, Nonglai, Kokklang, Nongsaeng, and Nonsawan, with an initial membership of approximately 57 families. The people in the group were interested in using their farms to do integrated and sustainable agriculture that will provide for the needs of their families. The network helped them learn new techniques and ideas for farming from each other.

Through group learning and development, all 57 families were visibly able to reduce inputs within 6 months and increase income within 1-3 years. Savings, which have increased through village savings funds, provide a source of capital for members to develop jobs involving self-reliance. Many

members have been able to reduce their level of debt. Water resources for agriculture have increased, the soil is more fertile, and the number of big trees is increasing year by year.

In 1996, the World Vision Foundation of Australia withdrew its support. UHF and UPHCC found that they had to cut costs. So they decided to use community leaders and health care workers to take the place of full time NGO staff in facilitating meetings. This method has proven very successful. Currently, the number of villages is up from 6 to 26, and the number of families from 57 to 510.

The vision for the next nine years is to use a strategy of expansion that relies on friends and relatives both inside and outside the villages. Thus the network will expand by binary fission, like an amoeba, from 1 to 2, from 2 to 4, from 4 to 8, and so on. The membership will increase from 500 families to 1,000, from 1,000 to 2,000, and from 2,000 to 4,000. If Ubolrat district has 4,000 self-reliance families, who each plant 1,000 big trees, then this district will increase the number of its big trees by 4,000,000, of immense value, both financially and environmentally.

Women's Network

In 1997, Ubolrat hospital and the Ubolrat Hospital Foundation appointed Dr. Tantip Thamrongwaranggoon, Mrs. Nipa Taiso, and Miss Nirawan Ruamtam, to investigate ways of helping women to develop family industries into community industries, by relying on local knowledge and products.

The Women's Network was established the same year. Its activities include silk-weaving, natural dyed cotton weaving, making bags and shirts of various designs, herbal shampoo production, and food and fruit processing. The working policy of the women's network stresses production for self-consumption, with any surplus to be given to friends and relatives, or sold on the open market to generate income. This income could then be used to support the family, wipe out debt, and expand integrated farming activities. There are regular monthly meetings of female leaders from every village, along with study tours chosen by the women's leaders themselves. This group has seen membership rise rapidly from an initial 68 to 391 by the end of 1998.

During the next 9 years, Ubolrat District Women's Network will have a vital role to play in establishing and developing community industries to earn secondary incomes. This raise in income should encourage migrant laborers in the family to return home.

The Traditional Healers' Network

The Traditional Healer's Network was formed in 1996. Its aim is to revive the use of traditional healing and herbal medicine. Regular meetings of the network have led to the systematic development of traditional Thai medicine. A system of traditional medicine has been created at village level. There is a referral back to the village for symptomatic therapy. Traditional medicine

has also evolved to provide massage therapy and advice about the use of medicinal herbs, as well as creating a plant nursery for herbs and fruit and timber trees for distribution to interested parties. Operational results have seen an increase in the number of traditional doctors in the network from 28 to 63.

The members of the Traditional Doctors' Network, apart from achieving mutual self-reliance, have also set themselves the target of researching and developing their knowledge of traditional medicine in order to use the herbs that grow in the forests.

The Monks for Good Environment Network

This group of monks started out caring for HIV patients in 1996. However, the focus of this group changed from HIV to the more pressing environment issues as time went on. The nearby Nampong river is badly polluted. People dump their garbage in it, factories release untreated waste in the waters, and still others are rearing fish using chemical feed in another part of the river. In order to protect the river, and increase awareness of the necessity to keep the river clean, this network of monks has created "fish palaces" in different parts of the river. "Fish palaces" are sections of the river where it is illegal to fish. People come to "make merit" by releasing fish into the river. These activities, the monks hope, will draw attention to the plight of the river and cause people to change their attitude towards natural resources.

The Elderly Citizens' Network

In 1995, Ubolrat hospital and the Ubolrat Hospital Foundation appointed Mrs. Nipa Taiso, the head of the operating theater who was interested in community work, as a coordinator to work with members of the Elderly Citizens' group of Ubolrat sub-district. This is a group of elderly who are interested in setting up a fund for assistance with funeral management, meeting regularly, and going on study tours in order to learn about self-reliance.

Regular meetings have seen group membership spread from 8 to 64 villages and from 250 to over 2,200 people. Study tours have led to the initiation of a variety of activities for the organization and its members. For example, there is a visiting scheme to provide encouragement for members who are sick and who have to be admitted to Ubolrat hospital. Volunteers from this group serve as representatives to explain to new patients about the range of services available to outpatients at the hospital. There is an annual anointing ceremony for the elderly and there is a savings group for the elderly and their relatives, to provide a source of capital for promoting integrated farming, and family/ community and business.

In the long term, the Elderly Citizens' Club will be like a big Pho tree, providing shade for Ubolrat District's Civic Group, because the elderly, apart from their love and consideration for their children and grandchildren, have also accumulated great knowledge and capital.

The Health Volunteers' Network

Health volunteers receive free health cards and health benefits from the Department of Public Health. Many health volunteers were so by name only, and not by deed. The Health Volunteer's Network was created in order to bring health volunteers together and allow them to share and exchange ideas about how their jobs can make a difference in the villages.

Since 1986, every village in Ubolrat district has had permanent health volunteers, and since 1987 there have been annual meetings, and education and training sessions for all these volunteers. . The health volunteers have participated in campaigns for health promotion and disease control, and the philosophy of self-reliance has been spread further afield. Since 1989, a savings fund that helps meet the funeral costs of any volunteer who dies was established. Now the savings fund has over 30,000 baht.

There has been an expansion in the work of this network—for example, funeral services have been expanded to cover the families of health volunteers. Apart from this, the Village Health Volunteers' Network, together with the Ubolrat Hospital Foundation and the Ubolrat District Public Health Coordination Committee, has established annual prizes, to provide encouragement and motivation.

Civil Servants' Network

In 1998, the Ministry of the Interior provided support for civil servants and various group leaders to hold regular meetings in order to generate and spread the ideas of mutual self-reliance to all 64 villages in Ubolrat hospital. But because of cuts in funding, this group has discontinued.

Health Officer's Network

District health officers, nurses, and doctors who work in the community need a way to exchange ideas, learn from each other, and support each other in their work. In order to meet this need, the Health Officer's Network was created two years ago. Dedicated health professionals are a part of this network that is trying to spread the ideas of sustainable development as a means of achieving good health.

The Village Headmen's Network

Government funding to villages passes through the hands of the village headman. In the past, the headmen would use these funds to build roads and ditches. The money was almost never spent on human or social development. This network was created in order to encourage village headmen to think more critically about where to spend government funds.

Tambon Civic Society

The development of *Tambon* Administrative Organization (TAO)⁵ as the focus points of tambon civic societies is a main strategy in the national development plan. It corresponds to the policy of decentralization laid down by the new National Constitution, and is in accord with the 8th version of the National Economic Development Plan, which emphasizes developing people, families, communities, and society.

5 The TAO is the local administration authority.

Regular monthly meetings of interested TAO members, as well as study tours chosen by the group, such as visits to villages which have been successful at creating strong organizations has led to a greater understanding of the idea of a self-sufficient economy. A self - sufficient economy, apart from stressing production for self-consumption and the long-term creation of life insurance, is capable of developing environmentally sound family/ community industries and businesses that are based on the knowledge, technology and products of a community. For example, the Tung-pohng TAO has become the focal point of Tung-pohng Tambon Civic Society. This Civic society has been responsible for developing self-reliant jobs for various groups in the community, especially in the area of integrated farming. In addition, it has established a reforestation project in honor of the king of Thailand, from 1999 to 2002, covering over 300 rai of public land in Tung-pohng tambon.

The expansion of tambon civic societies in Ubolrat district holds the principle of letting members invite acceptable TAO members from other tambons to join the group, or go on study tours, in order to spread the ideas and practices of mutual self-reliance.

Ubolrat District Civic Group

Starting in January 1997, the Ubolrat District Public Health Coordination Committee and the Ubolrat Hospital Foundation held joint monthly meetings with representatives of various community groups and leaders of integrated farming groups from every village, in order to create a shared vision. The vision is one of mutual self-reliance and good quality of life and environment for the people of Ubolrat district.

When representatives from many different groups come together, it results in cooperation. For example, Ubolrat district's activities to prevent dengue haemorrhagic fever were supported by all the groups of this civic network. Activities appropriate to local culture and resources, including circuit meetings are held at integrated farms, enabling members of Ubolrat's civic groups to learn and apply what they have seen to their own farms even if they do not belong to a farmers' group.

In order to pass on its ideas to future generation, the Civic Group has organized a children's camp, and is trying to establish children's group in villages to enable children who to gain work experience alongside community leaders. Child and youth group leaders will become part of the civic group in the future.

Operational Results and Evaluation

Standard indicators of community development are not useful to evaluate our activities given SCD's holistic development vision and the fact that development goals are set by communities themselves. So, SCD is in the process of designing an evaluation method that reflects all its activities.

The SCD Foundation, in conjunction with the Northeast Region Village Philosophers' Network, is currently undertaking work to research and develop family happiness indicators for the northeast region. Each family will have a means of self-assessment that can override pure income indicators in order to avoid the scenario of success being measured only in terms of money accumulated. If happiness comes from many different elements, we need to collect individual family happiness indicators, we can then produce happiness indicators for each group, *tambon*, district, province, and region. Eventually, the goal is to create a Gross Domestic Happiness indicator for the whole nation. This GDH rating can be adjusted to accord with the economy, society, culture, and environment of each area.

Because the successes of the programs cannot be captured by the few development indicators we have available today, following is an elaborate description of how the SCD programs have impacted communities.

Working methods emphasize forming groups of people at village level who have a shared interest or similar vision of the future. These groups are connected in a horizontal network with the existing vertical governmental system. Meetings and discussions are held to collect and analyze data, to find problems, to analyze them and their inter-relationship, to find alternative solutions through brainstorming, guest speakers, and study tours. Eight years of using these working methods has produced many changes, in the society, environment, economy, health, and children's welfare.

Society

In Ubolrat district there are 26 groups with 510 member families, and in total the project has 52 groups with a membership of 1,477 families. People organizations have been created in 26 villages in Ubolrat district, 14 villages in Pol district, 9 villages in Wang-yai district, and 3 villages in Wang-noi district, a total of 52 villages in 4 districts of Khon Kaen province. These groups have been able to learn together and undertake activities to solve the problems as prioritized by the group members.

Thirty-eight natural leaders have developed in the Ubolrat district groups, with the project having a total of 108 such leaders from 52 villages. These natural leaders are gifted communicators both within their groups, and with outside society; they are intelligent, unselfish, and readily accepted by their membership. Fourteen of these natural leaders were elected as TAO members in 1997. They meet every month at the village, district, and province level, in order to learn together and exchange experiences in solving members' problems. Leaders from three *tambons* are currently coordinating with other interested TAO members in their own and other *tambons* to create an "ideal TAO", which can create a civic society that is capable of achieving mutual self-reliance for all members of society.

Forty-eight members' children, who migrated to work as laborers in big cities, have now returned to help their parents. Parents and children can live

together, everyone has work to do. In addition, we have found that 22 families who used to migrate to find work every year, now no longer need to do so, after being in the project only 2 years.

Efforts to help villagers in 52 villages meet together for discussions and to send their leaders to meet together, in what we call *Glum Soe*, have led to exchange of experience and building of trust and love for each other. For example, people organized to collect small trees to donate to *Paw Samarn* of Nontae village when his trees were all destroyed by a forest fire. Due to the charitable efforts of other members, he was able to re-establish himself very quickly. Other examples include the charity drive to solve water shortages in Talard Noi village, and regular visits to members' farms to provide mutual encouragement and motivation. All of the above examples show that these groups help create mutual generosity, and further strengthen community organizations.

Group formation at every level gives community groups greater bargaining power--villagers can now excavate ponds at a cost of only 8 baht per cubic meter, as opposed to 25 baht in the past. They can buy small fish for only 5 to 10 satang each, they can request trees from the relevant authorities, and they can establish projects to request funding from the government sector and international sources.

The formation of women' groups at village, district, and provincial levels, has meant that members can buy cotton and silk thread more cheaply. The bimonthly meeting of the Mit-Mai-Fai-Ngam group gives the members direct access to consumers, so they can sell silk and organic fruit and vegetables at much better prices than in their villages.

The civic society has gradually expanded its networks. Teachers who are interested in these ideas have begun using them practically both at school and at home. Midday meal programs in 26 schools now feature organic fruits and vegetables and the school environment is shady and green. Many schools have received support from the local community and former pupils, both in the form of annual charity drives and ongoing donations; Seventeen educational funds have been established, with a total of 402,945baht, to strengthen learning processes for teachers and pupils.

Environment

Collective learning has enabled every village to recognize the problems of drought, low soil quality and the bad effects of using chemical pesticides. Members in every village have collected funds to solve water resource shortages. At first, people dug their own ponds by hand; later, people used their own money to hire excavators, resulting in 266 ponds. Others borrowed money from the Bank of Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives (BAAC), to dig another 348 ponds. The Prime Minister's Office provided funding for a further 160 ponds, and funds borrowed from the Thai-German Foundation provided another 70 ponds. The UNDP funds in 1998 provided funds for another 50 ponds, and other funds produced another 102 ponds.

As a result, there are now 966 ponds with a total storage capacity of over 1.5 million cubic meters, with every member having between 1 and 5 ponds, thus helping to reduce water shortages.

Members now realize the importance of growing trees, both fruit and timber, to improve the environment and the economic conditions of the members. As a result, the number of trees has increased by over 200,000, with a wide variety producing bio-diversity, using local types that are well-adapted to the climate and are also resistant to insects.

Apart from growing trees, 1,034 families. (70% of total membership), are now aware of the dangers of chemical insecticides, and have planted herbs such as citronella and galangale to repel insects. Others are also involved in growing certain types of flowers that help to reduce incidence of insect attacks, and planting local types of vegetables that are extremely resistant to insects and do not need insecticide.

1,027 families, (69.5 %), now recognize the importance of improving soil fertility, and use organic fertilizers, as well as growing legume crops to improve the soil. Many people also now raise chickens, cattle, or pigs to provide a free source of organic fertilizer for soil improvement.

Economy

Coming together to analyze problems has meant that members have been able to identify many areas of unnecessary expenditure, and the alternatives provided by integrated farming enables families to reduce their inputs considerably. In terms of food, they can plant, vegetables, and raise animals for their own consumption. Many people have a surplus for distribution to friends and relatives, thereby strengthening village unity. Many have a surplus to sell in order to increase income and reduce debts. Indeed, some people who had small debts are now debt-free, and those with large debts have been able to reduce their level of debt substantially.

Village savings groups, apart from being a source of capital for members in time of necessity, also help members to save for their old age. There are a total of 49 savings funds with a total of 2,367,448 baht. Most importantly, the 200,000 big trees, planted by members provide long-term, guaranteed life insurance for all members of the family.

In every village there are now farmers who have been able to substantially increase their income, with wholesalers coming to the fields to buy all kinds of agricultural produce, such as vegetables, bananas, papaya, fish, ducks, and chickens. Farmers who have been in the project for more than 3 years have a surplus to sell every day. In addition, women's groups from 38 villages have cotton and silk to sell all year round. Sales totaled 2,000 pieces in 1997. The women also make natural dyed bags, with prices from 20 – 150 baht per piece, and sold 1,500 bags last year.

Health

Farmers in the projects feel satisfied and happy to see their trees and fish get bigger every day. They have crops, vegetables, fruit, fish, and meat to eat in sufficient quantities. In two villages, Dong-bang and Kam-pla-lai, there are no children with protein calorie deficiency because the parents are very aware of the importance of good nutrition. Members have money to build proper toilet facilities and to buy large rainwater containers and food cupboards, as well as good quality medicines. Farmers have work to do every day in their fields, meaning that they get good exercise. They have regular opportunities to meet with development workers, teachers, agriculture workers, and health workers, and learn about health promotion and disease prevention.

Dong-bang, Kok-klang, and Subsomboon villages have established regular "Health Markets", which integrate traditional and modern medicine to provide an alternative means of medical care for the population and reduce the workload of public health care facilities

Communities are beginning to overcome difficult problems, like accidents, alcohol, cigarettes, drugs, AIDS, and others, which can only be solved by shared understanding and cooperation. According to a survey carried out in 1997, 132 members have been able to analyze their problems and stop smoking for a period of at least 1 year, and 113 members have been able to stop drinking alcohol.

Teachers have also initiated many integrated farming activities in the schools. Funding from the Ministry of Education and part of Unicef funding has been able to reduce the incidence of serious mal - nourishment in schoolchildren. Continued meetings between community members, teachers, public health workers, and NGO development workers have meant that all children now have toothbrushes and toothpaste for use at school and at home. Children are regularly tested and provided with the treatment for intestinal parasites. Children and young people have taken part in an educational camp to highlight and to improve understanding about the dangers of AIDS and the importance of preserving the environment.

Education and Child Rights

Unicef has provided financial support for children, parents, community leaders, teachers, public health workers, and NGO development workers to hold regular meetings at village, district, tri-district, and administrative board levels. This has led to a widespread exchange of ideas and experiences, enabling interested network communities and schools to learn together, to adapt, and apply various ideas that are suitable for each community and school. Improvements have been made in the following areas.

Local curriculum

Many community leaders, such as *Paw Sorn Mee-daung*, have become village teachers. Many of these villagers have excellent communication skills, making the children interested, excited, and eager to learn. These

village teachers have pride in helping to bring the school and the community closer together, instead of remaining separate as in the past. This has resulted in increased community funding for school development and greater assistance from the school in writing projects to request funding from various sources to be used in community development.

Changes have not only been limited to within the community. Many community leaders have established community learning centers for education and to expand their ideas to other villages, both inside and outside Khon Kaen province.

Parents' forums

In 1996, Unicef provided funding to meet the cost of food, at 500 baht per village, for each village to hold a forum for people interested in educational development. At these forums, there was an opportunity to exchange opinions on protecting child rights, child development, and expanding educational opportunities for children and young people. Many people donated money to education funds. Some gave televisions to be used for educational purposes, some donated chickens for school chicken farms, or banana trees for school banana plantations, both being used for food in school lunch programs, and some worked for free to help build chicken coops or plant nurseries, and others donated computers.

This close interaction between school and community has meant that the schools have been able to support the community in many areas. For example, Pa-dang school has created an "Outstanding Parents" project, and Nohn-jan-teuk school established a Pupil Income Generation Project and created an in-school agricultural market.

Child forums

In 1996, Unicef provided 500baht per village to cover food for child forums, to give children an opportunity to express their desires and feelings. In the first year, the working committee organized Children's day festivals. For example, Ya-nang-Non-tae school held a debate entitled, "Agriculture in the Age of Globalization". Sub-pu-parn school held a forum to give children the opportunity to express themselves on stage, both through speech and acting. The Ubolrat district held a young People's Anti-AIDS and Environmental Protection Camp. In addition, many communities and schools have created child and youth groups to undertake beneficial activities.

In-school activities

Through the activities of the SCDF, both schools and communities gained the opportunity to discuss and exchange opinions and experiences, and enabled them to recognize various problems, such as poor health resulting from inadequate nutrition, lack of agricultural skills, and inappropriate behavior. Schools and communities jointly created various problem-solving projects, such as rearing chickens, pigs, and fish to be part of lunch programs, thus providing the children with food of sufficient quality and quantity, as well as practical, agricultural experience.

Three schools have built plant nurseries to provide plants and trees for the school and for distribution to villagers. Nine schools have saving funds, enabling children to learn about the principles of cooperatives. Ten schools have created youth sports groups, to make children and young people interested in sports and to keep them away from drugs. Four schools are currently improving their environment by creating shaded gardens for relaxation. Non-jan-teuk school has collected funds to build a community learning center. Another four schools have silk-weaving and basketry projects. Sub-pu-parn school has a course of meditation for raised consciousness.

Partial funding from Unicef has enabled the designated activities to take place and has led to the generation of extra funding to enable these activities to meet their objectives. Those involved, namely teachers and villagers, have seen great improvement in terms of educational development and the development of many fundamental child rights. In 1996, 922 children from 17 schools participated in various projects, and in 1997, the number of children increased to 1,225 from 22 schools. In 1998, the numbers increased again to 2,550 children from 26 schools.

Education Funds

Schools and communities are working together to generate funding through various activities, such as education charity drives, donations from parents and benefactors both inside and outside the villages, and income-generating activities inside schools and communities. They have used the education funds in various ways. Some support the education of poor children, and some provide welfare benefits for children, such as educational toys, sports equipment, or musical instruments, with decisions being made jointly by the teachers and the communities. It is our strong belief that education funds administered by the teachers and the communities will have an important role to play in educational development and in developing child rights.

The activities of SCDF, which stress group learning processes and empowering communities, nicely compliment the preventive and curative programs run by the hospital committees. The community development activities of the SCDF are essential to ensuring that the people of Ubolrat can have a good quality of life.

CHAPTER 6: THE FUTURE

For the future, the hospital first hopes to maintain all present activities where all networks and villages cooperate in areas like environment, child health, and fund raising. Additionally, SCD hopes to encourage sustainable development in new villages. This will be done through networks of community leaders, teachers, health personnel, and NGOs.

Through our activities with various groups we have found that a lot of knowledge is generated through the group learning processes. In order to effectively channel and spread this knowledge, more people should have access to it. So, the hospital staff with some network leaders is planning to

establish a "People's College." This will be a place where villagers can learn from each other. The curriculum will not be sanctioned or imposed by the government as it does in its own schools. Education here will be relevant to their environment, economy, and culture. The aim of the College will be to develop "change agents", people who can be leaders in their communities, facilitate group formation, and mobilize their community into forming civic groups. Only through these "homemade" change agents can the knowledge and ideas spread far enough to reach everyone.

Currently, there are 2,500 families involved in all the networks run by the hospital. In the next 18 years, we hope to have one million families who understand self-reliance and can have a good quality of life.

The hospital has been successful in many of the activities it has conducted. However, it still has a long way to go before it reaches its goals. The Ubolrat Civic Groups have a shared vision for the year 2007:

- The citizens of Ubolrat, whenever they are sick, have guaranteed access to good medical care close to home complimented by an efficient public health care system.
- There should be fewer people suffering from preventable illnesses, thereby reducing medical care costs.
- People can be mutually self-reliant, leading to physical, mental, social and spiritual happiness.

AUTHOR'S BACKGROUND

After graduating as a medical doctor from Ramathibodhi Hospital, Mahidol University in 1984, the author worked as an intern at Khon Kaen Hospital for one year and then transferred to work at Nampong Hospital for one year. Since April 1986, he has been the director of Ubolrat Hospital. When the author first became involved in public health fifteen years ago, he wanted to see people achieve physical, mental, social, and spiritual well - being. However, the existing health systems, the market economy and the prevailing attitudes towards health posed many obstacles to achieving these goals. For the last thirteen years, the author has been working at the grass-roots level in Ubolrat District. Through his professional and personal experiences, he has found that the community hospital can be an important point of leverage in health system reform, the ultimate goal of which would be to provide good quality of life for all people. His present work aims to achieve these ends.

In 1995, the author became a member of the Rose Garden Group. This is an academic group that discusses many issues of national interest, such as anti-smoking campaigns and social welfare. His involvement in this group provided the author with many ideas and inspired him to think and act independently of prevailing norms. His father's commitment to social service has also been a great source of inspiration for the author. The author would also like to acknowledge Dr. Prawes Wasi, Dr. Suriya Wonkongkatap, Dr.

*Beyond Disease Prevention and Health Promotion: Health for All through Sustainable
Community Development*

Prommin Lerdsuridet, Dr. Suwit Wibulpolprasert, Dr. Somsak Chunharat, Dr. Werapan Supanchaimart, Dr. Yongyut Kajorntham, and all the traditional village healers who have taught him so much and helped him in his work.

Be Decent Be Happy: Apprehending the Truth of Sustainable Happiness *By Wiboon Kemchalerm*

Summary

Headman Wiboon, an intellectual leader of Eastern Forest Conservation, has collectively learnt from the reality for several decades. Trial and error interventions were done through his practices. His life was at stake between win and loose. He did everything the others done for instance cash crop farming, airline laborforce, military officer, herbal healer or even ordained to a Buddhist monkhood. However he loosed. When he has done different by means of learning process. Ultimately he has found the truth of sustainable happiness. It was right understanding to life as a natural ground. Be sufficient bring about sustainable happiness to life.

Background

I was born on the 29th of December 1936 at Koh Kanun Sub-District, Panom Sarakham District, Chachoengsao Province, about 100 km. from Bangkok. My father was an expert on herbs and held a traditional medicine shop. My mother was a farmer and died when I was 5.

I completed my 4-year elementary education at Wat Phongsaram School at the age of 14 and headed for Bangkok to earn my living. I spent my life as an adult and searched my way to continue learning on my own, what often caused my changing occupation, as I wanted to have time to learn. I finally completed secondary school at the age of 20. It was, according to Thai tradition, the age for ordination to monkhood. I went back home to do so, and spent 6 months in the temple. Then I disrobed and went back to Bangkok to work in the catering section of Japan Airline. I had then to go back home for military conscript.

In the military service, I worked in the archive office where I learned about the first national economic development plan, and was interested in the policy of export of agricultural product.

I ended my military service in 1961 and went back home and worked together with my brother Vijit Kemchalerm at Huay Hin Village. We started to cash crop agriculture being at the same time middleman buying agricultural products from farmers and sell them to traders in town. At the beginning the business ran quite well, but due to rain shortage, the harvest was bad, we had more loss than gain.

In 1969 I was elected to be headman of Huay Hin village due to my large acquaintance of people in that area and due to my knowledge and experiences I had obtained from Bangkok which I had more than other people, especially my skills in contacting local officials. I belonged to that

generation of village heads that could retain the office till retirement, but I earlier resigned in 1993.

Trial and Error

Let me go back to my agricultural activities in 1961. At that time I grew soybean, popcorn and cassava as being promoted by the government. The problem started to arise in 1971-1972 when the price dropped. In 1973 was the worst year for cassava. Many farmers moved to rice growing, what nobody in that region had done before.

In 1976 I planted cotton as a joint investment with other villagers. At the beginning we made good profit, but as many farmers did the same thing, the price dropped, and we suffered with heavy loss. I led farmer movement to campaign for better price threatening to go into demonstration. It did not help much though. Local influential people threatened me for life.

Investment in cash crop was a risk as they required high investment, with the main aim of selling the product. I suffered loss and the debt increased, and due to my involvement in the farmer movement, I was forced by the banks to sell more than 30 hectares of my land to repay my debt. In 1981 was left with only 1.2 hectare of land, and had to rethink about how to survive with this amount of land.

Be Different

My life changed. I had to think first of how to survive, and not how to gain profits as I used to. I started with growing what I would need the shortest time so that my family and I could eat, the surplus was then sold so that I could have some cash to buy other things. I did so over a year and learned that if I grew vegetable for consumption, even if I had no cash in the house, I could still survive without so much problems.

As I used to be close to my father, an herbs expert, I have some basic knowledge about herbs, I started to collect herbs in order to take care of the health of my family and myself. Herbs have become another source of my income. Besides, I have income from fruit trees and other plants, which multiplied gradually in my limited space, but with much more variety. Some of the plants are grown to home use, some only to keep balance to the nature, to be food for birds and animals, to keep the ground fertile.

The problems in the past have taught me that if the products were linked with the market, farmers would never succeed in their occupation because they have to respond to the needs of the market more than their own need. I changed my mind from producing for the market to producing for family consumption. The surplus is then sold in the market.

I started experiment new mode of agriculture by imitating the natural forest, growing many plants. My long years of experiments and testing have come out to be a successful model called "Forest Agriculture", which is a

management of land without relying on other people's labour and on the market.

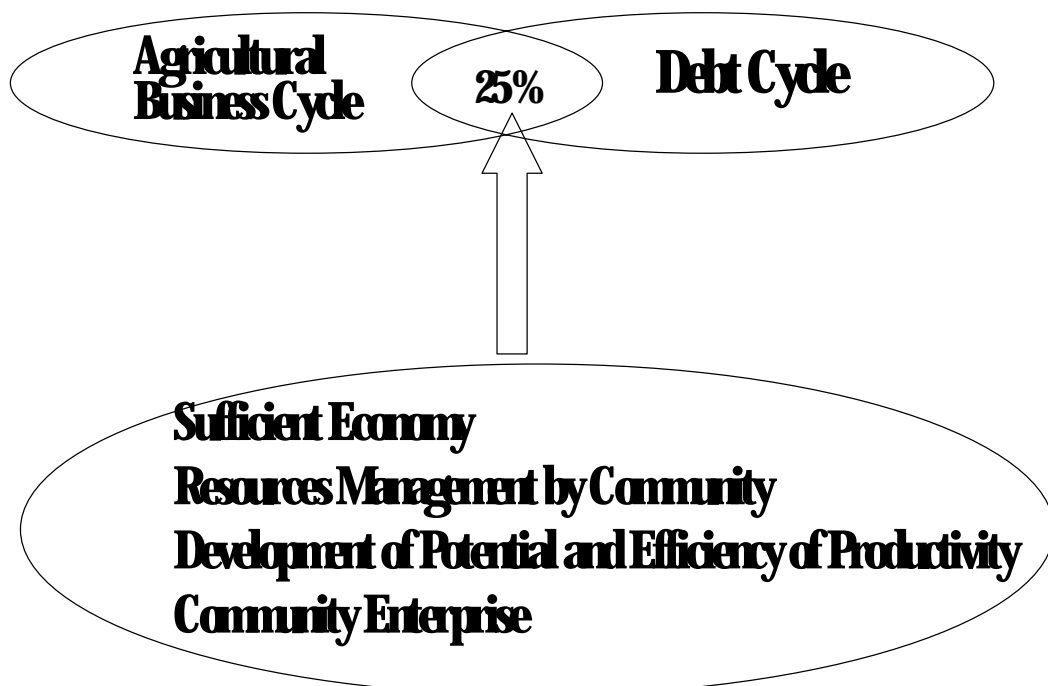
I have been sharing my ideas and experiences with other farmers, using my own Forest Agriculture as a learning place for communities and those who are interested in new mode of agriculture. I am invited to speak in seminars and training also in the universities. I set up a library, a roadside market for our community to sell their local products, learning activities for children and young people to experience sufficiency and being close to the nature. All of this take place in the Forest Agriculture site.

Be Decent Be Happy

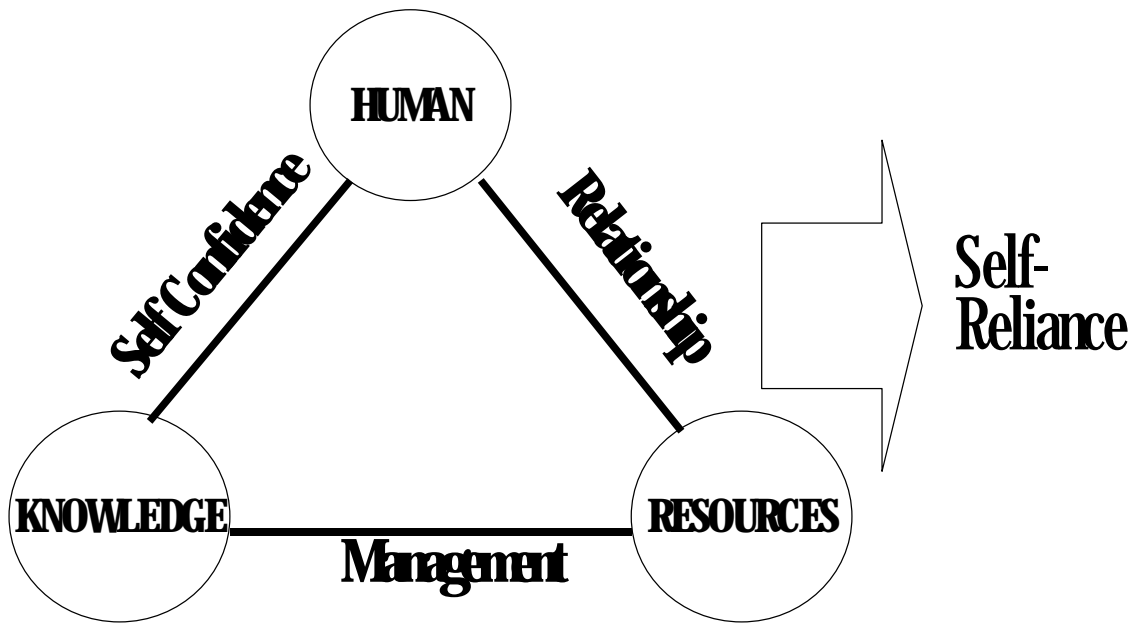
To be self-sufficient is not that easy, but it is something that we have to do, starting "from within". The following is what I mean with "self-sufficiency".

Building a self-sufficient base for economy, a balance between life and income. Farmers can survive if they save one-fourth of their land to work out for their own livelihood. I do not reject the market, but I am against depending totally on the market. You need to have something to eat. Once you have enough to eat, the cash from selling products can be saved, and the products from other three quarters of land could still be source of income.

- Get deep understanding of life, spirit, and interest;
- Learn to know yourself - your expenses;
- Learn to know your problems - debt and income;
- Learn to know your natural resources and your potential;
- Regain self-confidence, believe in your own potential;
- Create plan or guidelines for life, based on self awareness;
- Life and family plan for self-sufficient economy;
- Community plan to social security;



Be Decent Be Happy: Apprehending the Truth of Sustainable Development



Learning Process for Self-reliance

Relevance of Soils for Gross National Happiness *By Thomas Caspari*

Introduction

“Think how difficult life would be without soil to grow food crops. ” This sentence from a Bhutanese geography schoolbook for class VII students (RGoB 1994) may sound trivial in our ears. But sometimes I believe that it is useful to remind ourselves of the very basic things in life. Each of us has seen soil (at least its surface), smelled and touched it and very physically used it for planting our food. Its presence is so obvious and yet its fertility so essential for all agricultural activities as the main source of our livelihood. The four Buddhist means to avoid dissatisfaction (food, shelter, clothing, medicine) are directly or indirectly related to it.

However, soil is not only part of *our* household (economy), but also integral part of nature’s household (ecology). Therefore, e. g. talking about soil means looking at environmental conservation as well as agricultural production. And where the spheres of Man and Nature meet, the domains of spirits and local deities are located. Being aware of these few aspects, it may not surprise that there are multiple points of contact between the down-to-earth subject of soil and the high-minded goal of Gross National Happiness (Table 1):

Table 1: Soils and their affinity to Gross National Happiness

GNH constituent	...and how soil is related to it
economic development	soil fertility = “natural capital” RNR sector made up 33% of the GDP in 2002 ¹ policy of self-reliance care of the soil contributes to well managed HEP and national wealth ²
promotion of cultural heritage	“agri-culture” (e. g. land use techniques) belief in deities (<i>kLu</i>)
environmental preservation	integral part of ecosystem
good governance	equivalent of “good farming practice” concept of “sustainability”

Soil is indeed a good example of *sunyata*, of the way, how things are interrelated to each other in non-hierarchical relationships. In the following,

1 Figure taken from: “Economy doing well, RMA reports”, Kuensel, 10 January 2004

2 Soil management is of importance for HEP (Hydroelectric Power) production because of its potential effect on the seasonality of flow and its associated silt contamination (for more information on this topic please see Wang Watershed reports of 2002/3 by Baillie et al.)

I want to examine three “spheres” where soil is essential, and – as this seminar is about conceptualising and implementing the philosophy of Gross National Happiness – make some suggestions what can be done at various levels to maintain Bhutan’s soil resources.

Sphere 1: Soils as an integral part of the environment

Soil can be seen as a dynamic, living system of organisms reacting with organic and inorganic matter. Major ecological functions include soils as:

- interface between all other parts of the ecosystem (atmosphere, hydrosphere, biosphere and lithosphere)
- warm, well watered and stable habitat for animals, plants and microbes
- recycling of dead and discarded organic material into inorganic nutrients for future life
- integral part of the global element cycles
- storage of nutrients and water from times of plenty for future shortages
- natural water filter
- chemical buffer and reprocessing, turning potentially harmful substances into useful materials for the continuation of life

A first comprehensive paper (Baillie et al. 2004) about Bhutan’s soils and their distribution and properties will be published in March 2004, presenting the findings of the Bhutan Nation Soil Survey Project (MoA, Simtokha) lead by Chenchu Norbu. It is impossible to summarise the findings in a few sentences and I therefore only want to point out few aspects:

- soil formation within the Bhutanese landscape is often complex, and one soil profile may contain different parent materials, which complicates the interpretation of analytical results and the classification within international systems.
- there is altitudinal zonation of the soils
- the soils of the southern foothills are less developed than expected from the wet and warm climate; this is maybe due to the geological instability of the area close to the Main Boundary Thrust (MBT)
- up to at least 3000 m, the soils are moderately weathered and leached
- higher up, soils become increasingly acid with growing surface litter and less developed subsoils

Taking into account the adverse conditions for soil development in Bhutan (steep slopes, intensely seasonal monsoonal rainfall, increased pressure through growing population), the current condition of the soil cover is surprisingly satisfying. This fact also finds its expression in the virtual absence of past and present (reported) famines.

Sphere 2: Soils and land use

Little is known about the early history of Bhutan. It seems likely that early settlers - maybe *m(o)enpa* people - mainly relied on forest resources for their

livelihood. During our current cooperation project³ we discovered and dated charcoal on top of fossil A horizons (former topsoils, now buried) within Phobjikha valley, indicating some kind of slash and burn land use, maybe in connection with “primitive agriculture” from at least 2000 years before present in full. With the arrival of Pema Lingpa (1450-1521) at the latest, the influx of people into this valley grew rapidly, and grazing and possibly also arable agriculture and deforestation was probably more intensive than before.

With time, different indigenous farming systems evolved all over Bhutan, which must have generally been successful and lead to what we nowadays call sustainable land use, e. g. *tseri* (shifting) cultivation, *pangshing* (grass fallow), crop rotation, intercropping, contour ploughing, regular application of organic matter and low plant population densities. Apart from signs of more frequent land slides in the steep eastern areas (especially in terraced rice fields around Radhi) and naturally high soil erosion in the southern belt due to higher rainfall and unstable geology, soil degradation is not common nowadays.

However, the pressure on the soil is increasing. With population growth at around 3. 1% (RGoB 2000), the number of people to be fed is likely to double by 2020. Further fragmentation of land may occur, with the average agricultural land holding currently being at only 1. 5 hectares per household (RGoB 2000).

Declared political aims as defined in the 9th plan include:

- enhancing rural income
- achieving national food security (“self-reliance”)
- conserving and managing natural resources
- generating employment activities
- The scope to reach these aims is considerably narrow, as the portion of cultivable land is unlikely to exceed 10% of the country’s total area (Baillie et al. 2004), of which already 8% are currently under use. Until today, increased agricultural production as well as productivity have been implemented mainly by enhanced fertiliser input, new and/or improved seeds, farm mechanisation, shortened fallow periods and the construction of irrigation channels.

For the short term, positive effects like increased harvests and additional incomes for farmers have been obtained. It has to be pointed out that besides new opportunities, the present development results in land use changes (e. g. shortening of fallow periods; conversion of gently sloped,

3 To clarify aspects of soil genesis of high altitude and alluvial soils in Bhutan, a collaborative research was initiated in 1999 between the BSSP and the Soil Science Institute of the Technical University Munich (TUM), Germany. The soils of Bajo RNR-RC and soils developed on fluvial terraces in the Chamkhar Chhu valley north of Jakhar were subject of the first joint research trip in autumn 2000. The second excursion lead to the Phobji-Gangtey valley system, central Bhutan. A final expedition in 2002 was undertaken to study the eroded landscape around Tshogompa, Wamrong, East Bhutan.

fertile *tseri* land into permanently used dry land) and creates a range of soil-related problems, e. g.

- negative chemical impacts: reduction of organic contents leads to reduced stability of soil aggregates; depletion of macro- and micronutrients (e. g. observed Zn and B deficiencies in apple and citrus orchards; Norbu, pers. comm.); acidification due to fertiliser use; pollution through pesticides and fertilisers (e. g. over-fertilisation of maize with urea in eastern Bhutan (Baillie et al 2003);
- negative physical impacts: soil compaction negatively effects the soil structure, leading to decreased water permeability, aeration and root growth;
- chemical and physical degradation will result in a decrease in soil organisms and their biodiversity; besides soil life, all external organisms may be affected by intensive use of pesticides.

General dangers include the loss of soil fertility as a combination of biological, chemical and physical properties, often also termed soil/land degradation. By extrapolating observations and data from outside Bhutan, Young (1994) estimated 10% of Bhutan's arable land being subjected to some degradation. Norbu et al. (2003) provide the first reliable account of the different types of land degradation within the country with special attention to their occurrence, causes and interactions. *In situ* degradation due to soil organic matter depletion is identified as the main degradation process.

In autumn 2002, our research team examined the ravines below Tshogompa, a small village situated south of Wamrong (Lumang *geog*) along the Trashigang-Samdrup Jongkhar highway. During the course of our stay it became clear, that the local soils have developed in steep terrain and unstable geology (Shumar formation) as unfavourable "natural settings", and have been further destabilised by deforestation, poor water management (leakages from water pipe system installed in the 1980s) and failed development efforts (e. g. a trial to start rice farming on slopes lead to new landslides and was soon stopped). Thus, a mixture of natural and man-made causes is responsible for a bad case of soil degradation, the complete loss of soil through land slides and ravines.

Fast and complete loss of soil also occurs during urban growth, which often affects the most fertile areas (e. g. Thimphu expressway).

Sphere 3: Spiritual dimension of soils

Having grown up in the Western world, my understanding of Buddhist philosophy and its implications for everyday life is necessarily restricted. I therefore have to apologise for the shortcomings of this section and hope that the Buddhist reader will be able to add her/his own views and ideas to this important aspect.

From my stays in Bhutan I have been impressed by the strong emotional connection which people of all age seem to have with the soil. I would guess

that for nearly all of them, soil is more than a mere production factor and maybe even a medium through which to get in contact with local deities and spirits. Locations for our fieldwork had always to be carefully chosen, and had to be at a certain distance from the next religious building (*dzong* or *lhakang*) or other “holy places”, which were not as visually obvious, at least not to us European visitors. While digging a profile, the topsoil with its plants was carefully removed (and put on top again afterwards) and all macroscopic animals were brought to safety. When we wanted to dig a soil profile close to Rukubji, we would have only been allowed to do so if we could have promised not to cause a future crop failure. At that time we did not know about the local crop failure in 1984 which was seen as a consequence of annoying the protecting deity *dramar pelzang* by moving his dwelling (*tsenkhang*) to another place following road construction in 1981 (Schicklgruber & Pommaret 1997).

Karma Ura (2001) has compiled numerous examples of how deities mediate the relationship between people and local resources. Negative human influences like killing animals (in case of land use e. g. by ploughing), polluting the environment (via fertilisers and/or pesticides) or using land which is associated with deities may result in crop loss, landslides or natural disasters. The people’s reverence for the soil’s fertility and the hope that the next harvest will be similarly successful finds its expression in the habit of pouring some drops of each drink on the ground before drinking. Another form of appeasement offering is seen in the acceptance that parts of the crop will be eaten by wild animals.

Interestingly, Bhutanese farmers do not tend to associate crop failures with the possibly poor fertility state of their soil or their maybe inadequate management. They regard soil fertility as “inherent” feature of the soil and rather identify more “visible” causes such as pests, diseases or bad weather as main causes for bad harvests (Norbu, personal communication).

More than once I wondered what happens now, that humans have increasing capabilities to control and positively influence crop yields through fertilisers and pesticides. Will it render the influence of deities and spirits less important? Will one of the “strongest indigenous social force(s) in nature conservation” (Kinga 2001) simply disappear? Karma Ura notes that “spirits and gods do not hinder people any more from developmental steps being harmful to nature” (quoted in: Hargens 2002). As an example, *zeitgeist* seems to have found a different approach to crop losses by wild animals: according to the 9th plan, the problem shall be addressed by “prescribed and controlled culling of prolific pest species like wild boars” (p. 118). The “prescription” may however take account of non-material considerations, e. g. religious sensitivities.

Figure 1: Four-quadrant analysis of the relationship between humans and soil

Interior-Individual	Exterior-Individual
Psychological joy about good crop growth, fear for crop	Behavioural ploughing

failure (loss of income) identification with land, pride of possession positive/negative emotions towards labour of land use Spiritual direct interference with local deities during fieldwork	crop planting fertiliser/pesticide input protection of crops against animals (e. g. wild boar) harvesting
"Agri-Cultural" specific land use techniques (type of crops, time and mode of planting, ploughing etc.) specific land use patterns (bare fallows, <i>tseri</i> cultivation) Religious success/failure of activities indicate "mood" of local deities crop loss to wild animals sometimes viewed as offerings to appease local deities	Ecological soils as habitat for animals and plants storage and filter medium biological-chemical "reactor" (nutrient cycling) Sociological distribution of farm land within the community (size, location, fertility) exchange of harvested products (barter) cooperation with RNR-RC (extension agents) participatory development
Interior-Collective	Exterior-Collective

A clear way to portray these multiple dimensions which have to be considered for integral, holistic development, namely Wilber's four-quadrant model, has been introduced to the GNH discussion by Sean B. F. Hargens (2002). I have tried to use this approach to outline the complex "relationship" between humans and soil (Figure 1).

The Middle Path

From the above, I think it has become clear that soils play a key role within man's and nature's existence and coexistence. Soils can rightfully be counted among a nation's most valuable possessions. "A nation that destroys its soils, destroys itself" (Roosevelt 1937). It is therefore justified to make soil conservation a top priority in national politics.

The challenges ahead in the agricultural sector are considerable, and often first results from development seem confusing or contradictory. Let me name two examples:

- **Farm mechanisation:** simplifies people's lives and makes farming more attractive for the young generation, thus counteracting rural depopulation;
but:
 unchallenged mechanisation leads to accelerated loss of soil fertility (as described above), further decrease of job opportunities, further income inequalities, decrease of cattle (resulting in reduced nutritional supplements, less manure and nutrient transfer from forests to fields, and reduced possibility to manage grazing land) and degradation of unpaved farm roads by heavy machines.
- **inorganic fertiliser input:** causes fast crop response, helps to alleviate hunger and poverty;

but: over- and improper use is likely to have negative effects a) through their mining, production and transport, and b) on the fields in the long term: urea and sulphate have acidifying effect; urea may trigger nutrient imbalances in fields (because only N is added, and natural soil K and P are depleted, “mined”); sulphate adds P, which may cause eutrophication in neighbouring water bodies; furthermore: fertiliser is expensive and causes dependency on specific companies and countries.

I have written this manuscript with the conviction that Bhutan will be able to handle the considerable challenges ahead: Firstly, the concept of Gross National Happiness is in itself a holistic one and provides the multi-dimensional approach needed to embrace all relevant material and spiritual levels associated with soil conservation. There is no need to adopt “foreign” policies like e. g. Agenda 21 (UNCED). The idea of *sunyata*, the “interrelatedness” of all things is of further help.

Secondly, the Buddhist “Middle Path” will be the guideline to avoid the pitfalls of extremes. In spite of the possible and partly already visible negative impacts on soil, development need not be stopped, but pursued in a carefully, balanced way. The philosophy of GNH will have to lead to a sound management philosophy and sustainable resource management in practice. Only if this venture succeeds, emerging conflicts as between agricultural intensification and natural conservation may be solved.

Numerous concepts have been developed outside Bhutan to guarantee sustainable agricultural development. The one which - in my opinion - comes closest to the GNH approach, has been termed “Low External Input Sustainable Agriculture” (LEISA)⁴. Hilhorst & Toulmin (2000) describe it as follows: “LEISA promotes the use of ecologically sound techniques which are based on understanding of agro-ecosystems, while building on farmers’ knowledge and experience. Its methods aim at strengthening the internal dynamics of these agro-ecosystems, using resources that are locally available, complemented by external resources only when alternatives do not exist. The approach also aims to boost farmers’ self-reliance, protect local values and preserve biodiversity [...] and makes intensive use of participatory development.

In the following sections I will give some ideas, what soil fertility management implies at the operational level and how the necessary steps may be organised.

Operational levels

Analogous to the GNH constituent of good governance as a guideline for the country’s administration, a catalogue of measures to ensure good farming practice is being developed by NSSC and other technical branches of MoA and promulgated by the Extension Services.

⁴ More information about LEISA can be found on the website of the “Centre for Information on Low External Input and Sustainable Agriculture” at <http://www.ileia.org>

At field level this means maintaining or enhancing organic matter input. Norbu (1997) has shown that the management of organic nutrient sources such as animal dung, forest litter and crop residues is an integral part of the indigenous land use systems in Bhutan. Experiences about land use techniques are transferred from one generation to the next and adjusted to the various soil types, having mainly been identified and grouped according to their colour, water retention and workability. Regarding organic matter input, nature and handling of these amendments may strongly vary depending on climate, socio-economics and soil types. Especially in the western regions, farmyard manure (FYM), produced by mixing animal dung, forest litter and crop residues, is the main form of organic input. Maintaining the existing integrated crop and livestock systems is therefore of high importance for the fertility of the soils.

After harvest, pooled and dried stalks, stubbles and weeds are being collected, decomposed and incorporated before the land is again prepared. Additional sources of organic material comprise kitchen residues (if not fed to pigs) or any other form of organic waste.

In some places, the burning of pooled organic residues is common practice because it is thought to decrease the weed populations and prevent soil-related diseases. Roder et al. (1993) report in detail about *pangshing*, a labour-intensive procedure of burning heaped dry topsoil, using plant biomass or manure and soil organic matter as “fuel”. Besides beneficial effects of pH increase, improved K availability and reduced C/N ratio, major disadvantage of this practice are the substantial gaseous loss of N and C, and full exposure to erosion in the initial period after burning. Fallow periods of 15-20 years are required to maintain the sustainability of this land use type.

Enhanced input of N can be obtained by temporarily sowing plants capable of biological N fixation. Intercropping of cereals with peas has been observed from some areas in eastern Bhutan as part of indigenous land use strategies (Norbu, 1997). N and P deficiency have been identified as one of the main causes for rangeland deterioration in northern Bhutan (Gyamtscho 2002). In case of rice farming, the small *Azolla* fern is traditionally used to increase N inputs.

Apart from being a source of nutrients themselves, organic amendments are proven to enhance mineral fertiliser efficiency, microbial activities and the soil structure in general. This results in secondary beneficial effects like improved aeration, higher water holding capacity, and less inclination to wind and water erosion.

After harvest, mulches, cover crops and certain trees protect the soil from erosion, conserve soil moisture and moderate soil temperature changes. Other mitigation measures against soil erosion include hedge planting, contour ploughing and early action against starting landslides (filling up

gullies after monsoon time, planting of trees etc.). The promotion of agroforestry – planting crops and trees together – has many proven benefits and is already being promoted through the 9th plan.

Last but not least the careful use of pesticides (if not even their abandonment) should be in everybody's self-interest. If a soil is healthy and in good state, it has a high resistance against diseases and might also strengthen the crops to withstand pests.

This short summary is of course far from being complete. The above recommendations are just the most important ones and additional measures will have to be implemented depending on the specific local situations which may strongly vary.

It will be essential to establish some kind of monitoring system to a) collect field data on the current state of Bhutan's soils under different crops, management regimes, different altitudes etc. and b) to choose suitable indicators to assess soil fertility on selected reference sites in regular intervals. Such indicators may include:

- harvest assessments
- plant available contents of basic nutrients (P, N, K)
- organic carbon contents
- bulk density measurements
- CO₂ production rates (as indicator for biological activity)

Less quantifiable information like individual observations and comments from the local population, the occurrence of land slides and ravines etc. can also be helpful.

Pollution monitoring (as already mentioned among the 9th plan environmental objectives) will be another important aspect. The monitoring should be done in appropriate time intervals and the results incorporated as part of the “quantitative measurements” of GNH into a “Gross National Happiness Report” as suggested by Hargens (2002), ideally issued every 5 years. This would give necessary feedback to those responsible to see if the “Middle Path” of sustainable development is still being followed or if soil resources are possibly stressed beyond their capacity.

We have to acknowledge that even if we can plan all *things* in detail, it is still impossible to plan the change *within* people. Changes in attitude often take long time or do not occur at all, especially if new regulations are overimposed on the people instead of being carefully communicated.

I am convinced that the transfer of knowledge concerning the “non-material” or even spiritual dimension of soils must not be neglected. In the Western world, experience shows that, with increasing mechanisation of agriculture, people have less contact to soils in everyday life, they are “detached” in the truest meaning of the word. This is in disagreement with the importance of soils, as indicated above, and it also does not reflect the uniqueness, beauty and complexity of this living system, which is admired by countless

scientists around the world. And because of this I believe that there might be a chance to negotiate a smooth transition from a partly fading mystic to a more secular philosophy of soil without questioning the value and significance of the earth underfoot. Regarding the reverence for it, farmer wisdom and scientific understanding are *not* worlds apart.

Teaching the farmers as the persons in direct contact to the soil will be most effective. Topics could range from practical aspects like promulgating and discussing successful and innovative sustainable land use strategies, as well as rather theoretical information and advice on soil fertility maintenance and erosion control. A good example of how agricultural teaching can be implemented within already existing projects is RSPN's Integrated Conservation and Development Programme (ICDP) in Phobjikha valley (RSPN 2003): although the main purpose is to conserve the rare Black-necked Crane (*Grus nigricollis*), educating farmers on the significance of soil and water conservation, environmental protection, erosion control and soil fertility maintenance can be found among the agricultural project activities.

School books portraying soils more vividly and pointing out our dependence on and responsibility for them more clearly, will be a worthwhile investment. It can be pointed out that the soil-humans relationship is characterised by taking (harvest) *and* giving (fertiliser, organic material). Simple field exercises, where children could learn about soil life, e. g. by using plastic beakers with a magnifying lid ("bug boxes")⁵ could easily be conducted.

In higher classes, the concept of sustainability and nutrient recycling may be explained using soils as an example. Workshops for personnel in agriculture administration at various levels could build up on the same idea.

The important thing will be, that communication takes place at all. It will offer opportunities for joint learning and research between farmers, researchers, extension agents, administrative personnel and all other involved persons. One example can be the task of understanding and documenting the various traditional soil management systems existing in different parts of the country as recommended by Norbu (1997).

Organisational levels

Many people at various levels are involved in the process of sustainable soil fertility management. With the bottom-up approach of participatory development, a most suitable development option has been chosen, placing the land users in the centre of the approach. This policy is ideal because it involves farmers at the base of the process, encourages them to analyse the problems they face and accelerates the acceptance of new technologies and concepts. Indigenous knowledge in combination with local initiatives will be

⁵ Magnifying boxes can be viewed and ordered from various websites, e. g. <http://www.realcooltoys.com/worbesbugjar.html>, <http://explore4fun.com/bugbox.html>

able to provide the keystone of agricultural improvement and develop site-specific solutions, on which all complementing programmes can build on.

As a consequence, as Karma Ura (quoted in Gurung 1999) named it, “a sense of control, ownership and responsibility for the maintenance of collective local resources that had declined with a concomitant rise in the bureaucratic power” will develop (or at least not get lost).

Extension agents (EA) from the *geogs* and districts are in contact with farmers and can act as multipliers for implementing soil fertility management by providing advice, distributing new seedlings, documenting and communicating successful and innovative indigenous sustainable strategies. They may also exert some on-site-encouragement of good farming practices and provide feedback for agricultural administration and RNR-RCs.

The identification of suitable soil reference sites and their regular sampling, as well as measurement of the suggested soil parameters above (“indirect GNH indicators”), could be conducted by the National Soil Services Centre (NSSC, Simtokha). NSSC is already involved in the sampling of dry land, wet land and orchard soils with samples from around 700 household being processed. The current study aims at detecting and quantifying changes in selected soil properties in association with high mineral fertiliser inputs, continuous cropping of tuber crops (e. g. potato with maize), and switching from traditional to improved crop varieties.

The NSSC also acts as “interface” between soil fertility research and its field application. It is the ideal body, where useful know-how, technologies and innovations in terms of sustainable soil fertility management from *outside* Bhutan can be identified, thus combining external and indigenous sources of knowledge and narrowing the divide between researchers and “beneficiaries”.

The complex and multi-dimensional nature of soils has necessarily resulted in laws, regulations and development goals having developed in *various* sectors, e. g. agriculture & horticulture, forestry, environment and rural development. Another task for the NSSC to perform could therefore be to coordinate all policies related to the management of soils in order to identify possible conflicts at an early stage and thus avoiding unnecessary dissatisfaction. The overall aim in this respect could be to formulate a national action plan for sustainable soil fertility management.

On geog (GYT) and dzongkhag (DYT) administrative level, the process of sustainable soil fertility management must have high priority. Good governance for policy makers on this level could mean raising and maintaining a high level of consciousness about soil related questions like:

- What data are available on soil degradation for different regions of Bhutan? How reliable is this information and what is the estimated impact on livelihoods, national economy and environment?
- Where soil degradation is significant, is it reversible at an economically reasonable cost?
- How might improved soil fertility management contribute to achieving more sustainable rural livelihoods?
- Is structural change in the rural economy bringing a shift in rural people's reliance on soil resources, and how does this affect their management practices?
- In what areas is there a need for special policies and public/private funding to improve soil fertility management?
- What should be the role of various stakeholders in setting priorities and designing interventions? How can their role be strengthened by using more effective participation by farmers and other rural operators in decision-making and implementation?

(from: Hilhorst & Toulmin, 2000).

On their highest levels, government & administration will have to agree on a policy framework containing clear concepts about influencing input and output prices for agricultural products (and fertilisers), improving market arrangements (e. g. finding new markets for agricultural products like export of "organic" food to India, export of red rice to Europe/America), facilitating credit provision, supporting existing institutions (e. g. RNR-RCs), initiate communication and training, changing research and extension approaches, investing in rural infrastructure, promoting diversification of the rural economy and similar incentives to encourage farmers and other stakeholders to behave in desired ways. Naturally, farmers with access to markets and other infrastructure are more likely to adopt improved soil fertility management practices. To reach a more balanced level of happiness, the focus of these activities should therefore generally be on areas already subjected to soil degradation and those parts of the country having been identified as poor, remote etc. at present.

These emphases are not new and most of these topics are already being addressed and promising ideas for the future (e. g. identification of several centres for urban growth) have been developed.

According to the Bhutan 2020 document, about half of the population will still live in rural areas by 2020 (RGoB 1999a, p. 73). Maintaining the sustainability of the farming sector as a significant source of food, incomes, social identity and employment opportunities is therefore likely to be vital to the overall concept of GNH even in the long term.

Conclusions

Soils are an integral element of GNH. They are connected to all its major constituents, and this is why I believe that the sustainable management of this vital natural resource can also be based on the GNH philosophy. The holistic approach in combination with the Buddhist principle of the "Middle

Path” has the potential to avoid the danger of mere technocratic implementation of development goals, which could have devastating effects on Bhutan’s fragile mountain ecosystems in general and its soils in particular. It encourages including spiritual and environmental aspects of soils into the overall equation, and thus guarantees a balanced weighing of all involved interests, be it human or non-human.

Despite the present satisfactory situation, we must face the fact that with the current setting of rapidly growing population and increased human development activities, the material interest in soils as “production factor” may become of predominant importance in the future.

Nevertheless I want to conclude with the positive note that steps taken to enhance the state of the soils are likely to have favourable influences not only in one direction but several ways. Sustainably managed soils are healthy and fertile, resulting in material gain for man (crop success) and nature (minimum interference), psychological gain (stable income enlarges people’s choices) and last but not least hopefully maintain the reverence we feel for the “invisible mother of the farm” ⁶.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Ian Baillie, Senior Soil Surveyor in the BSSP during 1997-2000 for his detailed and helpful comments on this manuscript.

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⁶ This sensitive expression is taken from RGoB (1999b). There is a saying: “The soil is like the invisible mother of the farm. Although its presence is so obvious and its fertility so essential for all agricultural activities, the soil is often overlooked as a resource of the farming system. The cause for this apparent hole in the mind is probably the slow-changing character of the soil. [...]”

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Managing Water Resources for Happiness *By David Groenfeldt*

This paper explores how water resources can contribute more to human happiness. As numerous conferences and declarations have emphasized, water is an essential element for life. It is a precious resource that is fundamental to our very existence. The undisputed importance of water has generated a great deal of policy discussions about how best to manage water to ensure that there is a sustainable supply. A global vision for water, prepared for the Second World Water Forum in The Hague in 2000, articulated a happy future: *Our Vision is a world in which all people have access to safe and sufficient water resources to meet their needs, including food, in ways that maintain the integrity of freshwater ecosystems.*

When the principles espoused in the World Water Vision are applied in real cases, however, the values that dominate are almost invariably economic ones: How can water be utilized for the maximum economic gain? The logic for treating water as an economic good stems from the logic of development as defined by Western Capitalism: If the national economy is growing, then the citizens will benefit as they participate in that growing economy. This is the core principle of “conventional” approaches to water development.

There are other principles as well, which have become important secondary dimensions of the conventional approach. Recent discussions about the role of water management in meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), for example, go beyond pure economic thinking, to include an emphasis on poverty alleviation, gender equity and environmental sustainability. Yet even these rather progressive policies emerging from international water discussions are still rooted in the core principle of materialism, expressed as economic development. Water is viewed as a means of solving an economic problem of “under-development” defined in material terms. *This* value system is part of Western capitalistic culture, and is not necessarily consistent with the cultural values of non-Western countries. Indeed, the materialism expressed through international development policies is often inconsistent even with Western cultural values, and reflects, rather the values of a dominant subsector within Western societies.¹

¹The Green political movements in North America and Europe, and the emergence of organized environmentalism at local, national, and international levels, attests to this diversity of cultural values.

In contrast to the materialist logic underlying conventional approaches, water management oriented towards human happiness views market forces as means to a larger end – that of happiness. The material well-being of people certainly hinges on productive markets, but not to the exclusion of other dimensions of life such as social contentment, aesthetic appreciation, and spiritual growth.

Cracks in the Materialist Paradigm: New Trends in Water Policy

The recent evolution of conventional water policies – as articulated in the MDGs, and in the EU's new Water Framework Directive (see below) – reveals a trend towards opening the set of values that water policies are reflecting. In today's policy environment, the concept of happiness as a policy objective is not as far-fetched as it was a decade ago. This more open policy environment suggests there is an opportunity for engaging in a policy debate that is larger than economic growth vs. social equity, and brings in the fundamental questions of happiness as applied to water management. In this section we examine four very active policy arenas where values about water are being debated:

1. Water as an economic vs. a social good;
2. Environmental flows and water rights for Nature;
3. Indigenous cultural and spiritual values about water;
4. Multifunctional values of agriculture (and agricultural water).

The message that I hope to convey from these policy debates is that values about water are undergoing a healthy review among global water professionals and policy makers. The theme of “happiness” is not being addressed directly; indeed, most water professionals would probably view the concept as having nothing to do with water decisions. Yet the debates are very much about cultural values. The transition to a direct discussion about how water can enhance happiness is only a small step away.

1. The Debate Over Water as an Economic or Social Good

During the past two decades, there has been a growing consensus among policy makers that water should not be free; it should be treated as an economic good that has a monetary value. The alternative to this economic view is that water is a social good that can deliver benefits to particular segments of society. For example, free water supplies for poor urban neighborhoods, or free irrigation water for poor farmers, is viewed as a social strategy for helping the poor. The down-side of the “water for free” policies is that financing for operations and maintenance was at the mercy of government subsidies, and in practice, the amounts allocated are either too little, or the funds are too easily diverted. The typical result is deteriorated infrastructure and inadequate water service.

Putting a price on water is an objective that makes sense to economists more than to policymakers whose jobs depend on popular votes. The debate over economic vs social approaches to water allocation have become polarized as structural adjustment policies result in water tariffs, often without effective safety nets to provide a minimum supply of water to those unable to pay. Charging for water –whether in cities or on farms -- continues to be a highly contentious issue in many countries, and in international donor policies, largely because of the way the two sides are approaching the issue. The economists emphasize the efficiency of the proper pricing policies, and argue that subsidies to protect the poor can always be added. Social advocates, on the other hand, argue that the poor should be guaranteed adequate water as a human right, and not subject to special policies and programs that may or may not work as intended. The debate about privatizing water services is related. Public water departments typically lack the financial resources to operate the existing infrastructure, much less to make repairs or build new water lines or treatment plants. Private companies which are granted the power to charge a fee for water, are able, in theory, to finance needed improvements and thereby deliver water more reliably. Much depends on the effectiveness of governments to regulate the private companies to ensure they are setting a fair price, and to protect the interests of the poor who are least able to pay. In practice, government agencies may be unable to meet their regulatory responsibilities, and the poor may become worse off than before.

2. Environmental Flows and Water Rights for Nature

The Earth Charter initiative promotes an environmental ethic that reveres water bodies as intrinsically important independent from their economic value to people.² This ideology takes on a very practical tone in the debate about environmental flows and whether nature should be considered a water rights holder. An environmental flow is the water regime provided within a river, wetland or coastal zone to maintain ecosystems and their benefits.³ New water laws from Europe to South Africa to Australia, incorporate an environmental flow stipulation, as a safeguard against resource degradation. The South African *National Water Act* adopted in 1998 granted water resources the status of public good, under state control and subject to obtaining a license. The Act establishes a 'reserve' consisting of an unallocated portion of water that is not subject to competition with other water uses. It refers to both quality and quantity of water and has two segments: the basic human

² The text of the Earth Charter is available at www.earthcharter.org.

³For details, see: Dyson, M., Bergkamp, G., Scanlon, J.(eds). *Flow: The Essentials of Environmental Flows*. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland (2003); Available on-line at <http://www.waterandnature.org>.

need reserve and the ecological reserve. The first one refers to the amount of water for drinking, food and personal hygiene and the second one to the amount of water required to protect the aquatic ecosystems.

In Europe, the EU Water Framework Directive⁴ enacted in 2001 represents a major advance in European policy with the concept of ecological status being included in a legislative framework for the first time. Member states will be required to maintain sustainable water levels and flows and restore riparian habitats. In Australia, the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council is taking steps to restore the health of the River Murray system under the title, *The Living Murray Initiative*. The vision of this Initiative is, *a healthy River Murray system, sustaining communities and preserving unique values*. The Council's goal is to manage the resources of the River Murray to improve its environment, and also maintain the social and economic benefits of water use. Recovering additional water for environmental flows is one way of addressing this.

3. Indigenous Cultural and Spiritual Values about Water

The role of indigenous peoples in water planning and policy decisions is becoming increasingly visible. At last year's World Water Forum held in Japan (March 2003), indigenous participants drafted a Declaration summarizing their views on water, and articulating a spiritual and moral imperative to defend Mother Earth from the abuses she is incurring from conventional water development.⁵ The Declaration's introduction demonstrates the close connection that indigenous spirituality draws between people and Nature:

- We, the Indigenous Peoples from all parts of the world assembled here, reaffirm our relationship to Mother Earth and responsibility to future generations to raise our voices in solidarity to speak for the protection of water. We were placed in a sacred manner on this earth, each in our own sacred and traditional lands and territories to care for all of creation and to care for water.
- We recognize, honor and respect water as sacred and sustains all life. Our traditional knowledge, laws and ways of life teach us to be responsible in caring for this sacred gift that connects all life.
- Our relationship with our lands, territories and water is the fundamental physical cultural and spiritual basis for our existence.

⁴ For details of the Water Framework Directive, see:
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/water/>.

⁵ The full text of the Indigenous Peoples' Water Declaration, along with an overview of indigenous presentations made at the World Water Forum, is available at www.indigenouswater.org.

This relationship to our Mother Earth requires us to conserve our freshwaters and oceans for the survival of present and future generations...

External conditions favorable to indigenous self-determination in water development were given a boost in Nov. 2000 with the report of the World Commission on Dams which called for "...distinct measures to protect [indigenous] rights. These measures include the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous and tribal peoples to developments that may affect them" (p. 216)."⁶ This report has shifted the paradigm of indigenous interests in water development from the realm of economic analysis (Do the benefits to the non-indigenous communities downstream outweigh the costs to the indigenous communities that would be disrupted?) to the realm of human rights (the right to remain on traditional lands and, in effect, veto power over dam development that would displace indigenous communities).

Internally, within the indigenous world, there is also an evolution of policy stimulated by the more supportive external conditions. The most obvious trend is that of legal and political activism, using national and international laws, as well as public demonstrations and in extreme cases, armed rebellion, to solidify and even reclaim customary rights to water.⁷ A second trend is an appreciation of traditional water management arrangements as having a future and not only a past, and in fact, comprising a key ingredient of sustainable development.⁸ A third trend is acknowledging the spiritual dimensions of water and bodies of water (e.g., rivers). A cultural/spiritual view of rivers as live beings, and constituting sacred places, is ubiquitous among indigenous societies, and is very slowly gaining legitimacy as an aspect of native religion and world view that has practical implications for water development.⁹

6Dams and Development: A New Framework for Decision-Making, World Commission on Dams. London: Earthscan, 2000. [Available on-line at www.dams.org.]

7For an overview of indigenous efforts to reclaim control of water through legal and political pressure in the Andean region, see the paper by Rutgerd Boelens presented at the World Water Forum:

<http://www.indigenouswater.org/user/Boelens-Kyoto%20Paper.pdf>. For insights into armed resistance by indigenous communities in the Philippines, see Windel Bolinget, Asserting Indigenous Peoples' Rights is Not an Act of Terrorism, *Indigenous Affairs* 3/03.

8See D. Groenfeldt, Building on Tradition: Indigenous Irrigation Knowledge and Sustainable Development in Asia. *Agriculture and Human Values* 8(1-2), pp114-120 (1991).

9See Water Development and Spiritual Values in Western and Indigenous Societies (by D. Groenfeldt) a paper which draws on the presentations made at

4. Multifunctional Values of Agriculture (and Agricultural Water)

Since agriculture accounts for at least 75% of total water use in most developing countries, and since irrigated agriculture produces about two thirds of the world's food supply, there is a close correspondence between water and food. The concept of multifunctional values in agriculture, first articulated in the 1992 Earth Summit to refer to the environmental contribution of sustainable agriculture, was incorporated into development thinking through the publication of a recent OECD study on multifunctionality of agriculture.¹⁰ Since then the concept of multifunctional roles has been applied not only to environmental benefits but to all the various functions of agriculture that extend beyond the production of food and fiber. These goods can include rural community values (e.g., family farms), strong local economies, rural employment, and the continued health of rural culture; environmental contributions to biological diversity, clean water and air, bioenergy, and improved soils; regional or national food security, landscape values, food quality/food safety, etc.¹¹

In the context of paddy cultivation in Monsoon Asia, the multifunctionality concept offers a useful perspective to capture the historical richness of the co-evolution of society and rice agriculture that has dominated the historical development of the region. The social foundation of Monsoon Asia was formed by the people who developed and are sustained by water and rice. Paddy cultivation in this region is intrinsically multi-functional, serving many needs of society.¹²

The role of religious rituals as an integral part of farming practices is also included in the multifunctional concept, particularly where such rituals are obvious enough that even development consultants become aware of them (e.g., in Balinese rice cultivation rituals). While spiritual traditions in irrigated agriculture have gained recognition as contributing to effective water management (for example, rituals associated with allocating water among irrigation diversions in Bali), the idea that water

the World Water Forum, available on-line at:

<http://www.indigenouswater.org/user/Water%20Spirituality.pdf>.

10 Multifunctionality: Towards an Analytical Framework. Paris: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2001.

11 DeVries, Brad (2000). "Multifunctional Agriculture in the International Context: A Review". The Land Stewardship Project.

[<http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/mba/MFAReview.pdf>]

12 World Water Council 3rd World Water Forum (2002). Proceedings of the Pre-Symposium for the Third World Water Forum, "Multifunctional Roles of Paddy Field Irrigation in the Asia Monsoon Region," Otsu, Shiga, Japan, 20 and 21 March 2002. Tokyo: Japanese Institute of Irrigation and Drainage.

has a cultural utility in maintaining social-cultural traditions – a type of “happiness” -- is also implied by the multifunctional concept.

A Vision of Happy Water Management

The four policy trends discussed above are encouraging in that each addresses values beyond the purely economic; each deals with some aspect of life that overlaps with the concept of human happiness. However, each of these issues of debate falls well short of embracing the broad range of values that the happiness concept implies. The debate about whether water is a social or an economic good, for example, is primarily about social equity; the issue of environmental flows, in contrast, is couched largely in terms of economics (a healthy river provides a valuable range of environmental services) and only indirectly about ethics (the river's right to water). In contrast, indigenous values about water, as expressed in the Declaration on Water focus almost exclusively on ethics and morality; the river is sacred and our duty is to protect her. There is little guidance here about the type of development that might be consistent with these ethics: Can water be diverted for agriculture? How much water? What is the proper balance between human use of water and the river's intrinsic right to that water?

The multifunctional concept offers the broadest scope for linking with the concept of happiness, yet the multifunctional approach is also the least articulated. What does it mean that agriculture – or water – has many functions beyond food production, and that these encompass intangible social, spiritual, and aesthetic values, as well as more quantifiable environmental and even economic (rural employment) values? The good news is that there are already efforts underway to find a new basis for making decisions about water use and development, and taken together, these new ideas provide a receptive terrain for discussing the concept of happiness as applied to water management.

In this section we explore what water management might look like with happiness as the over-arching objective. We begin with a working definition of happiness, then identify some key features of happy water management, look at a few cases where the happiness concept figures prominently, and then conclude with some suggestions for bringing happiness into water planning and management.

What is Happiness?

For our purposes here, defining happiness is the responsibility of the community of people within a given area. The boundaries of the community depend upon where the proposed water development will take place. Because of the nature of water – to flow downhill – the relevant natural boundary is normally going to be a watershed or basin.

And because of the nature of human society, the relevant social boundary will be cultural – the community of people sharing a cultural worldview. The people in this community, sharing a common interest by virtue of living in the same basin, and sharing a common culture, are the ones who can best define what happiness means for them. They may require facilitation and guidance, and they may never be successful in reaching consensus, but they at least have advantageous conditions for achieving a shared vision about what comprises happiness.

Key Features of Happy Water Management

The basic feature of happy water management is that the use and management of water enhances happiness for the community concerned (i.e., not only the happiness of the farmer who uses water for his crops, but the happiness of the total community, however that is defined). Operationalizing happiness as an objective of water management presumes that the value components of “happiness” can be specified in some detail. This is why happiness needs to be defined within a cultural context. For a traditional Frenchman, for example, agricultural water should support a food system that will bring high quality, fresh produce to the kitchen where his meal is prepared. To a traditional Jain, on the other hand, there would be a high value placed on using agricultural water to support a food system that causes the least disturbance to animal life. To a conventional American, the water should support a food system that brings food to his table for the least financial cost. A Frenchman would not be happy paying low prices for low quality food, nor is an American likely to be happy paying high prices for high quality food.

Traditional societies that have been little impacted by outside cultural forces – e.g., isolated farming communities in Bhutan – are already practicing an agricultural tradition that reflects community values and is in this sense a “happy” solution to the challenge of obtaining food. This situation does not imply that there cannot be improvements to the happiness of Bhutanese farmers. However, it provides a cautionary note to development ideas originating from outside the local cultural tradition. Efforts to improve happiness need to identify and preserve those elements that are already happy, and focus improvements on aspects that are not so happy, as defined within the local culture.

Happiness is dynamic, and cannot be defined only in terms of traditional values. Values also change, and traditions change in response to internal as well as external pressures. The annual cleaning of the irrigation canal, and repairing the diversion weir, is a social celebration in many irrigation communities, and a time of feasting as well as working; it is a valued tradition. However, even such a valued tradition may lose its value as more and more farmers become employed in manufacturing jobs and

more of the farming work is done by hired laborers. In such a case, a permanent concrete diversion weir might be a welcome improvement to the brush and rock weir that requires annual repair. The key features of happy water management need to be defined – and periodically redefined – by the local community.

Illustrations of Happy Water Management

Any traditional community built around water management can provide an illustration of happy water management where the manner in which water is used supports the value system of the community. A classic example is the anthropological study of Pul Eliya (Sri Lanka) by Edmund Leach, in which he documents the central role of irrigated agriculture in the life of the villagers.¹³ But can happiness survive development? Are there cases of culturally-supportive water management to be found in the modern, globalized world? Here the role of happy water management is perhaps the reverse of the traditional context: Instead of water management reflecting the (happy) cultural values of traditional society, in the modern context, water management offers a means to consciously embody neglected cultural values which can thereby enhance the happiness of the community. This approach might be labelled, “Water Management with and an Attitude” where the very fact of rebelling against the dominance of materialist values renders neo-traditional water management a radical statement. Rather than the traditional farmer passively reflecting traditional values, the modern (traditional) farmer is actively rejecting modern materialistic values in favor of certain elements of traditional culture which he or she views as “happier”.

An example of this type of neo-traditional agriculture (and associated water use) is the movement of community-supported agriculture (CSA) in North America, Europe, and Japan.¹⁴ The farmers as well as the community members supporting them, are very consciously working on integrating the process of agricultural production with social and spiritual practice. Similar efforts are being made by independent producers who are not linked in any formal way, but whose collective approach within the USA has been labelled a “New Agrarianism” with roots to 19th Century American Transcendental philosophy.¹⁵

13Leach, Edmund R (1961), *Pul Eliya: A Village in Ceylon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

14For details about the CSA movement, see: Trauger Groh and Steven McFadden, *Farms of Tomorrow Revisited: Community Supported Farms and Farm Supported Communities*. Kimberton (Pennsylvania, USA): Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association, 1997.

15 See, for example, Eric Freyfogle (ed.), *The New Agrarianism: Land, Culture, and the Community of Life*. Washington, DC: Island Press (2001).

Examples of traditionally-oriented societies consciously using water management as a vehicle for cultural revitalization are more difficult to identify. There are many cases of indigenous societies fighting – either physically or through the courts – to maintain control of their water resources in order to continue their agricultural traditions, or in some cases to develop new agricultural practices. For example, indigenous farmers in the Andean region have made considerable progress in gaining governmental recognition of their customary water rights.¹⁶ And in Arizona (USA), the Hopi people are fighting for control of their groundwater that their own tribal government has leased to a coal mine company:

The Hopi tribe in Arizona (USA) is faced with an internal as well as external debate about water use and what constitutes “happy” management. This case illustrates the complexities of reaching consensus on what constitutes happiness, even within a single cultural group. An internationally owned coal company has a contract with the Hopi tribal government to extract high quality groundwater for its mining operations in Black Mesa. The aquifer which is being pumped for the coal operations also feeds the springs that comprise the sole source of drinking water for the entire Hopi tribe, and for the Navajo communities in this arid region. As a result of the pumping, which has gone on since the 1960s, the springs are starting to dry up, and the ceremonies that have always been integral to Hopi religion can no longer be performed.

How has the Hopi tribal government allowed this to happen? The tribal government is a relatively recent (1947) creation, imposed by the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) partly for the purpose of having a convenient body to consent to a coal mine lease. There are legal barriers to breaking the contract and stopping the mine, and most importantly, there are financial considerations. The vast majority of the tribal government's budget derives from the royalties and fees collected from the mining operation. The tribal council is not in favor of rescinding the contract, apparently for this financial reason. In their view, the happiness provided by the contract outweighs the happiness provided by healthy springs.

While this appears as a failure of finding “true” happiness, the environmental and cultural threat posed by the coal mine has stimulated local opposition, and a new appreciation of traditional cultural values and water management. The opposition group is organized around the leadership of a former tribal chairman, and is mobilizing Hopi tribal members to re-discover the spiritual and cultural importance of the

¹⁶See the article by Rutgerd Boelens, cited above, and other material on the website of the Indigenous Water Initiative (www.indigenouswater.org).

water that is currently being sold for profit. While happy water management remains an elusive goal, there is an ongoing process of debating alternative views of what constitutes the greater good for the Hopi people, and how water management can contribute to that happiness.¹⁷

Conclusions: Finding Happiness through Water Management

Within the water sector, “development” is defined in terms of physical improvements to water capture and conveyance systems which result in greater economic production. It is mostly about material improvements leading to economic growth. Material well-being is, of course, essential to survival, but how much material is needed for well-being? Whose concept of well-being – or happiness -- is relevant? The recent history of water development reveals a remarkable acquiescence to Western cultural concepts of what constitutes happiness. Are traditional societies really so unhappy with their own values that they look to the West for a new form of happiness based on material acquisition?

My sense is that Western concepts of water development have been adopted uncritically by developing countries eager to gain the international status of being “modern” and “developed”. Agriculture that focuses on traditional foods is quickly, and even happily, replaced by crops – such as high yielding varieties of rice – that come with international cultural approval. Is this consistent with local happiness? The question is rarely asked. A systematic assessment of what kind of future local farmers would desire, and what aspects of their lives brings them personal happiness, would almost certainly lead to a different development scenario than the one on which they are embarked.

How can water management lead to greater happiness? By taking a very deliberate and conscious approach to water development; by identifying the elements of traditional life that bring happiness (as well as any elements that may no longer serve a happy function) and setting a course towards a shared vision of cultural, and personal, happiness. That path will certainly include material elements, but it will also include spiritual, social, and emotional richness which is now being denied in conventional approaches to water development.

¹⁷For details, see the website of the Black Mesa Trust: www.blackmesatrust.org.

Cultural Promotion and Happiness: An Objective Analysis

By Ms Pema Eden Samdup

“Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross National Product”

His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuk, King of Bhutan

Unlike most nations that emphasise *Gross National Product* as a key factor to base and assess national progress and development upon, the **Kingdom of Bhutan** has adopted the unique concept of “*Gross National Happiness*” as a key policy concern and objective underlying national development. By its very nature happiness is a subjective concept that does not allow itself to either scientific analysis or assessment. This paper is a modest attempt at analysing the concept of *Gross National Happiness* with particular reference to Cultural Promotion as propagated by the Royal Government of Bhutan.

In the context of Bhutan’s vision for development, the paper will attempt an analysis of the concept of *Gross National Happiness* and the contributions of the four key factors (i.e., economic self-reliance, environmental preservation, cultural promotion and good governance) as envisaged by the Royal Government. The paper shall examine in particular the inter related concepts of Bhutanese culture and its national programme of cultural promotion with reference to its ambitious objective of obtaining Gross National Happiness.

What is culture? What do we understand by ‘Bhutanese culture’? Is Bhutan’s culture homogeneous? Or does it include other sub cultures? Why does one need to preserve or promote culture at all? And how does culture act as a catalyst to the promotion of *Gross National Happiness*? Can cultural promotion actually promote *Gross National Happiness*? Or will it serve as a deterrent to national unity? These are some of the questions that will be raised and discussed in a reasoned manner.

Gross National Happiness (GNH) is the ultimate goal of the *Royal Government of Bhutan* and has been placed higher than Gross National Product. Happiness has indeed been given precedence over economic prosperity. However, as we are all aware and as many academicians have said in prior seminars, Happiness is a utopian concept– an objective reality that cannot be analysed, counted or held on to. Happiness is elusive and it means different things to different people and even to the

same people it means different things at different points of time. There are no tools for measuring happiness or even for assessing the welfare of the state/ nation/ country. The *Royal Government of Bhutan* under **H M King Jigme Singye Wangchuk**, the fountain - head of philosophy, concepts and policies of development decreed that the ultimate goal of the government is to promote the happiness of the people. Happiness for the *Royal Government of Bhutan* has become a policy concern and a policy objective. Along with the orthodox notions of development, Bhutan's vision of development also includes other intangible objectives like "spiritual well- being and gross national happiness". (p.16), *Gross National Happiness- The Centre for Bhutan Studies, 1999*).

The Royal Government of Bhutan has hand - picked four key-objectives as their goal towards achieving GNH. These four objectives are:

- Economic Self- Reliance
- Environmental Preservation
- Cultural Promotion
- Good Governance

Here we need to keep in mind the fact that while Bhutan has adopted the terminology GNH as an index of the country's development as opposed to GNP, these two terms mean the same thing in the context of Bhutan. Or what would be a more appropriate interpretation is that while GNP includes all the three objectives of GNH, it may or may not include the third objective – cultural promotion and it definitely does not include Gross National Happiness as a policy matter.

Let us now look at the four objectives of GNH and analyse each of them in some detail. The first of the four objectives is economic self- reliance. Economic self- reliance would imply that a country does not have to depend too much on foreign aid and that a country can produce enough surplus produce for trade. Economic self- reliance would mean that a country has attained a degree of economic development and has changed its traditional modes of production for a mechanised mode of production. Bhutan used to follow a subsistence form of economy – in both herding and agriculture. However, with the passage of time and the progress Bhutan has made under the various five - year plans, and with the adoption of new and modern technology, Bhutan has even begun industrial enterprises of sorts – particularly in the field of the match factory, the plywood factory, the "Druk" and "Bhutan" processed fruits and the Chukha, Gedu, and Tala hydro-electricity projects – are some areas where this has happened. The second objective listed in *H E Lyonpo Jigme Thinley's* speech is environmental protection. It is important that everyone not only the people of Bhutan but people all over

the world realize the essentialness of the environment and preserve it accordingly. The environment needs to be protected not only for moral reasons but for economic needs as well and in order that the delicate balance between the economic growth and development of a country and its environment is maintained. This Bhutan does once again. The Bhutanese being governed largely by Buddhist thought and belief are aware and conscious of the need to preserve and protect the environment. The people of Bhutan believe that man and nature have to live in harmony, in perfect co-existence with each other, failing which man will have to face the wrath and fury of nature (akin to the Malthusian theory of population). Hence the country has stringent rules regarding environmental protection and 70 % of the country is still under virgin forest cover.

It would be interesting to analyse the concept of culture and to observe the way/manner in which cultural promotion can contribute to the concept of GNH and ultimately development. Moreover, the people of Bhutan appear to link happiness with the spiritual happiness and a sense of inner freedom, which they believe will contribute to the concept of GNH. This paper as the title suggests seeks to explore the meaning and definition of culture, and will try and analyse how cultural promotion can lead to GNH. It will also attempt to look at the changing nature of culture and will present possible problematic areas that could develop over time. Since this paper will deal with this third objective at length, suffice it to say that other countries would not normally place cultural promotion as a key objective of a country's policy. The last but not the least of the four objectives is the concept of good governance. Simplistically put good governances would imply good ruling in the case of a monarchy, or good management in the case of a modern monarchical system with decentralized powers. Good governance would also include effective balance between economic development and preservation of the nation's interests including culture and the environment. Good governance would also mean that the *Royal Government* not only governs the country in a fair and proper manner but also takes proper steps to ensure the country's welfare.

Bhutan began to follow a policy of modernization from 1961. By 1981, **HM the King Jigme Singe Wangchuk** had started a rigorous programme of administrative and political decentralization. While some could interpret the decentralization of power as going against the Divine Right of Kings, **HM the King** has believed that decentralization of power would in fact enhance democratic powers and would ensure greater responsibilities on the part of the common man. He reversed the traditional role of the King as an autocratic and stern figure (although he was neither of these to begin with) to that of a benign patriarch, a father figure. From the role of a powerful, all- in- all ruler to a benevolent

nurturer, **H M the King** has managed to change all pre-conceived notions of monarchs and monarchies. H M the King sincerely believed that the devolvement of executive powers (1998) and decentralization (the process began as early as 1981) would in fact encourage transparency in governmental dealings and would encourage the empowerment of people at the grass roots. In keeping with this view **H M the King Jigme Singye Wangchuk** did not hesitate from abdicating/devolving full executive powers on his Council of Ministers elected by the National Assembly of Bhutan. It may be noted that the Ministers of that first Council completed their term successfully and have been voted into power once again, along with two new ministers as well. Currently there are Seven Ministries and Seven Ministers in the Royal Cabinet. The Seven Ministries include: Agriculture, Communications, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Health and Education, Home, and Trade and Industry.

If one looks at Bhutan's development plans one would note that Bhutan has adopted a multidimensional approach to development. The country, the King and the people have aimed at not only economic development but also spiritual well being, along with material wealth. The government is committed to the economic, political and social freedom of the common people. But the government does not fail to lay stress on the fact that freedom from economic and socio-political concerns does not mean full freedom until and unless one experiences a sense of what they call "inner freedom, which is found inside each one of us." What is meant by this statement, is probably that each and every Bhutanese is not just free (as in freedom/ liberty) but that each and every Bhutanese is also free from the anxieties and angst that surround daily life and living or what in India would be called the question of "*Rozi Roti*" (making ends meet on a day to day basis) or the question of "*Roti, Kapada aur Makan*" (the basic necessities of life like food, clothing and shelter). It should be noted that the *Royal Government* takes care of the basic necessities of the people of Bhutan like providing good quality education and health care facilities. There are many countries all over the globe where such facilities are available only to the rich, even in India, Bhutan's largest and closest neighbour, quality education and health care facilities are distant dreams for the poor and available only to certain sections of privileged society. What that statement could also mean is that we as individuals need to be able to free ourselves from unnecessary wants and desires. Free from the chains and fetters of the world of *Maya and Mohaa* or the *World of Samsara* as the followers of the *Buddha Dhamma* would have it. Once again, Bhutan being largely, Buddhist, by faith, the policies of the *Royal Government* too are governed by the dictates of Buddhist philosophy.

Theorists like Stefan Priesner are of the view that Bhutan's well thought out developmental policy has "evolved from the country's unique socio-economic, historic and political circumstances." He is of the opinion that Bhutan's development policy is "one of the last truly indigenous development approaches." This will need to be explored and examined at some length before we can agree or disagree with Priesner's view.

Let us get back to the main concern of this paper – cultural promotion – one of the key objective of the goal of the *Royal Government of Bhutan*, towards the achievement of GNH. Before we begin to talk about this goal and whether or not the goal can be/has been achieved, we need to define culture. If we define culture according to modern terminology and usage it would mean a desirable quality that all human beings strive to attain. This quality can be acquired by reading good literature, watching numerous good plays and musical productions, attending concerts by well known and accomplished performers and visiting well known art galleries to view the art exhibitions of well known and lesser known artists. A person who has gone through all these rituals and who is able to speak knowledgeably about these artistic gatherings is what we would call a "cultured man /woman." Culture however, has another definition according to social and cultural anthropologists. Anthropologists like Ralph Linton have defined culture as:

Culture refers to the total way of life of any society, not simply to those parts of this way, which, the society regards as higher or more desirable. Thus culture, when applied to our way of life, has nothing to do with playing the piano or reading Browning.

For the social scientist such activities are simply elements within the totality of our cultures. This totality could also include mundane activities like washing clothes by hand, or in a washing machine or doing dishes by hand or in a dishwasher or driving a car, and for the purpose of cultural studies these stand quite on a par with "the finer things of life." It follows that for the social scientist there are no uncultured societies or even individuals. Every society has a culture, and every human being is cultured, in the sense of participating in some culture or other. "Another anthropologist, this time a cultural anthropologist - Ruth Benedict talks about "patterns of culture." She says,

Each culture is a unique configuration of inter-woven parts, all of which are shaped by the particular theme/ethos of that culture.

Bronislaw Malinowski defines culture as that which “serves the need of individuals and is the outgrowth of three kinds of human needs: basic, derived and integrative.” Cognitive anthropologists explain culture as a “blue print for action”, (not action itself, but a ‘grammar’, or system of rules, for behaviour; and a “code” – the job of the anthropologist being to break it.” Cultural ecologists like Leslie White and Julian Steward believe “culture” to be the major explanation of differences between human groups. Edward Tylor defines culture as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society.”

By now it has become evident that culture is the learned and shared patterns of human behaviour, and as an attempt on the part of the cultural anthropologist to understand human beings as total organisms who adapt to their environment through a complex interaction of biology and culture. After such a definition of culture, wherein not only human behaviour but also the inter-relationship between biodiversity, and culture would indicate that the *Royal Government of Bhutan* is indeed on the right path. *The Royal Government* too has identified these three key objectives as the key to the attainment of GNH.

Having defined culture in various ways we come back to the original question – what then is culture? Culture refers to all the innumerable aspects of life. It could and maybe even should, include, learned behaviours, beliefs, attitudes, values and ideals that are symbolic of or representative features of a particular society or community. Culture is also a shared experience – it cannot exist in isolation or in a vacuum. A single individual’s behaviour or thinking or way of life would not imply culture. But when an entire community or society behaves in a certain way or thinks along similar lines, or acts in a certain way that would signify a cultural practice. When we talk of the shared customs and mores of a community we are in fact talking about that community’s culture. But when we talk about the shared experiences of a group of people within the larger framework of a bigger community, we are talking about its sub-culture. It is important for us to define both culture and sub-culture as Bhutanese culture includes both the major mainstream culture and other sub-cultures as well.

Earlier on, we mentioned Stefan Priesner’s view of Bhutan’s development policy as being based on or due to Bhutan’s unique socio-economic, historic and political circumstances, we shall examine this statement in closer detail now. Bhutan is unique in the sense that she is a tiny land-locked Himalayan Kingdom, a tiny monarchy, a mystical land/Baeyul, yet, this tiny country can boast of not only a major Pan Bhutanese culture but also the existence of smaller sub-cultures living in harmony with each other. These sub-cultures are carried along with mainstream

culture particularly when framing developmental policies and not relegated to some remote corner of the country's map. For the purpose of explanation we would need to look at what constitutes Bhutanese mainstream culture and also examine the cultural practices of the other sub-cultures that combine to constitute the pan Bhutanese culture.

The concept of *Tsa-Wa-Sum*, loyalty to the King, the Kingdom and the people of Bhutan, is a good example of the pan Bhutanese culture. The practice of *Driglam Namzha* or the code of etiquettes is yet another fine example of the same. If we are to understand culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom and any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society," then we would have to include all the above-mentioned elements in our discussion on Bhutanese culture. Having mentioned this let us now examine Bhutanese culture in a little more detail. Going by the definition that culture includes all aspects of life. We would need to look at only some of the constituents of Bhutanese culture, as an inclusion of all aspects would be beyond the scope of this paper and that we shall do presently.

Bhutan being a land-locked country remained isolated for a long time and was able to save itself from various negative impacts of rapid development. In 1951 Bhutan was compelled towards modernization by several events already acknowledged by Stefan Priesner. However, with various political changes taking place around Bhutan, Bhutan had to embark on the journey towards modernization. Even as early 1968, His late **Majesty, King Jigme Dorji Wangchuk** had expressed his views on the goal of development as making "the people prosperous and happy." In 1971 Bhutan became a member of the United Nations. From the very beginning, since Bhutan entered the modern era, measures for preserving the culture always held supreme importance for Bhutan and various methods were adopted to try and contain and even counter balance the negative effects of modernization.

Being isolated Bhutan was able to pace her development carefully ensuring the growth and development of her economy while maintaining her cultural integrity and preserving her environment. Theorists have also attributed the religion of the state with having contributed to the GNH vision of **H M the King** and the people of Bhutan. Whatever be the causes for Bhutan's unique developmental policies we need to explore them.

Culture as we have decided includes the sum total of social customs, mores, traditions, beliefs, attitudes, values and ideals that are common to all the Bhutanese. Even if we speak very broadly we would note that the Bhutanese share these experiences and that it could be classified as

Bhutanese culture. Edward Hall has stated, “entire systems of behaviour made up of hundreds of thousands of details are passed from generation to generation, and nobody can give the rules for what is happening.” We must also, note that culture is learned through social interaction with other people and passed on from one generation to another by word of mouth and by leaving behind cultural legacies in which their children are born, grow up to become adults, marry, have children and pass on that same heritage to the next generation. It is also the learning processes through which human cultural traditions are passed on from one generation to another. Just as the vision of **His late Majesty King Jigmi Dorji Wangchuk** was carried on by his illustrious son **H M King Jigme Singye Wangchuk** and is being passed on to the able shoulders of the **Crown Prince**.

Bhutanese culture includes the all - pervasive influences of the ***Drukpa Kagyukpa school*** of Buddhism. It includes the social customs related to marriages, deaths, births, promotions, the social observances, the religious practices, the masked dances, the Tshechhus, the textiles that are woven which contribute to form a part of the living cultural tradition of Bhutan. The idea of a nation or nation state was in the minds of the Bhutanese as early as the 17th century. What could have contributed largely to the idea of one land was the unification of Bhutan under *Shabdrung Nawang Namgyel* under one religion – Buddhism. Moreover, there developed amongst the Bhutanese as associateion, a feeling of being one people united by a single faith and ruled by the same religious and political head of state. Hence, a feeling of being one people, occupying one nation began to develop in the minds of the 17th century Bhutanese even though the idea of nation, nationalism and nationhood were alien concepts that far back in time, specially for a remote, isolated land like medieval Bhutan. The reason why Bhutan could emerge as a nation state that far back in history was possible because of the absence of an alien culture to impose on it. When the ***Shabdrung Nawang Namgyel*** unified the country in the 17th century, then the only culture that prevailed in Bhutan was the Buddhist culture. Moreover, because of Buddhism Bhutan and her people were aware of living in harmony with the ecosystem, they could develop a set of well-defined values, so much so that they were representatives of Bhutan wherever they went.

With the modernization of Bhutan and the de-centralization of powers by **H M the King**, Bhutan entered into a new era. On the one hand Bhutan could walk into rapid economic development, while on the other hand she could slow down that pace and keep alive her traditions, her values and her cultures. To achieve such a balance was not an easy task. The policy makers had to take strong decisions and adopt effective measures to prevent too rapid a change. For this the **King H M Jigme Singye**

Wangchuk took the decision of propagating a national identity – an idea of the modern nation state. This national identity it was perceived could be achieved through a common language and a common culture. This policy decision of course received a lot of criticism – many saw it as an autocratic move, a move designed to do away with other sub-cultures. The point that this paper is trying to make is that while this decree leaves room for interpretation and misinterpretation, the government of Bhutan's decision might today be seen as an effective homogenizing move. The tiny Himalayan Kingdom was facing a looming threat. The threat of modernization, the repercussions and impact of opening up the economy too rapidly, development at a very swift pace, could lead to major upheavals in Bhutanese society and culture. It could even lead to acculturation of the worst kind or even total annihilation. On the one hand modernization could improve upon the traditional systems of agriculture, could improve telecommunication links, connect Bhutan to the rest of the world at a much faster speed. While modernization has attractive and tempting developments to offer the flip side of modernization could result in massive changes in traditional ways of life, This was a dangerous moment to be caught in. But the framers of developmental policies could weigh the pros and cons and take wise and important decisions for the welfare of the country and the people of Bhutan. As this paper mentioned earlier culture is not static, it is subject to change and while a gradual change is always advocated, too sudden a change in culture could lead to a culture's total collapse as history stands testimony to this fact.

Any study of culture would tell us that cultures change through several ways. Some of the ways in which cultural changes take place have been listed below. However, it must be noted that this is just an indicative list.

- Inventions that could be the consequences of a society's setting itself a specific goal
- Accidental juxtaposition or unconscious invention
- Intentional Invention
- Diffusion
- Intermediate Contact
- Stimulus Diffusion and
- Diffusion by Nature

A culture is a system, so a change in one aspect of culture could lead to a change in other aspects, whether the initial change is from within the society itself or borrowed from another culture. While some cultures are capable of handing more change from the outside there are other cultures that are not that adaptive could fall prey to acculturation very easily and rapidly. Acculturation by definition is the juncture in cultures when one more powerful and dominant culture makes the other less

dominant culture borrow from, it often under external pressure. The danger lies in the fact that very often, minor cultures lose all identity, characteristic features and authenticity and become vague parodies or imitations of the more dominant culture. If culture is an adaptive system, (here by adaptation we mean the way people relate to the environment so that they can survive and reproduce), and is the main way in which human beings adapt, then culture should be stable by implication, rather than open to constant change and flux. In this regard technologically simple societies have always been known to be more stable than other societies. However, all cultures change in response to the changing requirements of the environment. Some of the changes in a culture are not adaptive, and this usually leads to the collapse of cultures and their disappearance. Still other kinds of changes lead socio-cultural systems into more effective stages of energy transformation and greater complexity. These changes are what may be called evolutionary changes. Changes in culture can also occur because of several other reasons, for instance when changes occur or originate in the value systems and ideological framework of societies and cultures because of technological advancements that make people find new ways of relating to the environment. Sometimes, when the material conditions of life change then cultural changes take place. This usually happens when societies/ cultures that follow traditional ways / modes of production take to using modern, mechanical and technologically modes of production. When subsistence economies become technologically savvy too quickly, without taking into account the impact technological advancements could have on the quality of human life, society and culture at large, then cultural changes are bound to take place more often than not with negative implications. In other words, cultural changes may be described as an accumulation of all the data that percolates down to the nation's database in the form of feedback between the ecosystem, the ideological framework of different cultures, the use and state of technology in that cultural system and the inter- personal relationships between members of that culture.

Apprehensive of drastic changes that could affect the culture of the Bhutanese people adversely **H M the King of Bhutan** had to pass such a decree – a decree that asked people to be united under the common banner of a national language – Dzongkha and common culture. The following of a national culture meant that the people of Bhutan would dress in the same way. They adopted the *Kira* for women and *Go* for men as standard / uniform dress code for all. It should be mentioned that the dress code of the Bhutanese is distinct from the national dress of other countries. And while it stands apart and is emblematic of the culture of Bhutan on foreign shores, on home grounds it stands as a unifying factor. It serves to homogenize the different strata of society. A common dress code would serve to lessen the divide between the various income

groups, it would also serve as a unifying factor, it would create a sense of being one – one nation not divided along any lines not even along dress code. It makes the Bhutanese men and women distinct. It makes them stand apart as Bhutanese. As Michael Aris, Diana K Myers, Susan S Bean, Françoise Pommaret have pointed out in their book – *From the Land of the Thunder Dragon, Textile Arts of Bhutan*, “textiles as garments convey the social identities of their weavers,” the *Kira* and the *Gho* too convey the Bhutanese -ness of the Bhutanese. They also go on to talk about how sometimes entire villages are known for their weaving skill citing the example of the wool brocades of central Bumthang – the Yathra fabric.

The **Shabdrung** who is credited with unifying Bhutan in the 17th century is doubly credited with introducing the special hand woven garment for men - the *Go*, which was proclaimed the national dress of Bhutan in 1998, almost three hundred years later. In the fast-changing world of globalization an inculcation of the idea of a nation state or of nationality is essentially. We cannot be ethno- centric or gaze at Bhutan with western eyes, we cannot and should not superimpose upon Bhutan our own notions of modernization, democracy or globalization. Bhutan as a nation has to decide for herself when, how and what to do by way of moving into the 21st century. She has the right to pace the speed of her economic / technological development, (this is not to imply that Bhutan does not have the latest technological equipments, they do), while keeping her nation’s spirit alive and her national and cultural values intact.

The decree proclaiming the *Go* and the *Kira* as the national dress made it mandatory for the Bhutanese to wear to *Go* and *Kira* everywhere in public including schools, government buildings, offices, monasteries and temples/lhaghangs. This decree has made it possible for a sense of unity and the idea of nationalism to be formed in the minds of all Bhutanese – be they from the north, south, east or west. It also became an instrument for expressing “contemporary Bhutanese national identity.” While it was mentioned that the mainstream Bhutanese culture also allows for the peaceful co-existence of other sub-cultures, it should be noted that the sub-cultures too have chosen to adopt the *go* and *kira* as their national dress. Though the Bhutanese of the east (Merak Sakteng), of the north (Laya and Lhuntshi), in the south (Nepalese), do not wear the *Go* and *Kira* traditionally, but, in the spirit of nationalism, under the banner of one Bhutan, one culture, and one language they have chosen to adopt the national dress which has become a flame bearer for nationalism. Even in other parts of the South Asian and South-East Asia, people from these different countries/ cultures take immense pride in wearing their national costumes, so much so that in Malaysia recently, the author of

this paper discovered that not only did her Indian friend possess the Malay *Baju-khrong* but she also actually wore it (*Baju-khorang*) to work every day, even though she is an Indian by birth and neither is it compulsory in Malaysia to wear the *Baju-Kharang* for ethnic Malays. When questioned she said, “When I am in India, I wear the *Indian Salwar Kameez* and maybe even the *Saree* but when in Malaysia I wear what other Malays wear, it gives me a sense of belonging, a sense of identity.” This statement always strikes me whenever I see Bhutanese anywhere in the world. It never ceases to amaze me as to how even people least interested in cultural studies or remotely connected to anthropology are able to identify the national costume of the Bhutanese. They might not be able to distinguish which part of India, certain people come from by looking at their clothes or the manner in which they are dressed but the fact that they are able to identify the Bhutanese is marvellous achievement on the part of not only the *Royal government of Bhutan* but also on the part of each and every Bhutanese national.

As far as the question of a national language goes, once again the author of this paper feels Bhutan did the right thing by proclaiming Dzongkha as the national language. India, one of Bhutan’s largest and yet closest neighbours too has a proclaimed national language – Hindi. While the national language is Hindi, English more or less serves as the official language throughout the country. India did try and impose Hindi on the people, but as the history of English studies/even the history of modern India would tell, it did not work-India is too huge a country, has too diverse a culture and too many linguistic and cultural groups for Hindi to work as a national language. Moreover, in India the language issue became a major political agenda for those politicians who merely wanted to exploit the sentiments of the people to their political advantage. The south was the first to oppose Hindi’s role as the national language. In contrast, Bhutan is a much smaller country, has a smaller population and is less linguistically or culturally diverse. India has begun implementing the usage of Hindi in offices as all official documents are now bilingual and there are special classes held at all levels particularly in government offices, for those who have studied Hindi up to the Class V, Class VIII and Class X levels. These programmes are called *Prabodh*, *Pravin* and *Pragya*. All those central government employees who have studied Hindi as a second language only upto the 5th, 8th and 10th standards only have to attend mandatory classes and pass a written and spoken exam- the names of which were mentioned earlier. After clearing these exams conducted by the Hindi Cells of the Central Government Departments and the employees are granted certificates of completion of the *Prabodh*, *Pravin* and *Pragya* Programmes. Moreover special classes are also held for those whose first language is not Hindi, for instance the Telugu, Kannada, Tamil and Malayalam speakers, of the four major

south Indian states have to attend these classes. Competitions are organized and prizes are handed out as incentives. As far as the *Royal Government* policy goes – the policy of a national dress and a national culture and language – it is an admirable step in the right direction. Just as English and Hindi serve as the *lingua franca* in India, Dzongkha and English too could work in a similar manner and would serve as a unifying factor, particularly when faced with an alien language and an alien culture.

The Ngalops speak Dzongkha, which was as mentioned earlier also proclaimed as the national language of Bhutan in 1998. There are roughly 200,000 people out of a total population of 750,000 who speak Dzongkha as their mother tongue. While these 200,000 odd people speak Dzongkha as their mother tongue, the other Bhutanese too study Dzongkha at the school level and use it for commercial purposes and to be understood once outside their own districts as their own respective communities. The region inhabited by the Ngalops has diverse geographical locations and while Haa contributes by way of cultivating winter wheat, barley, buckwheat and potatoes, Paro and Thimphu grow rice, apples, plums and peaches. Punakha and Wangdue Phodrang being at relatively lower attitudes grow rice, vegetables, bananas and figs. The highlands of Haa also contribute to the national economy through pastoralism – yaks and cattle are raised in these high altitude regions.

Approximately 90,000 people, who live in Trongsa, Mangdeluns, Kheng, Bumthang, Shemgang, Lhuntse and Kurto districts/ dzongkhags, inhabit the central region of Bhutan. These districts are situated at different altitudes, and hence, they grow a wide variety of agricultural products. Rice, buckwheat, barley, wheat, and potatoes are grown, while, yak, cattle and sheep are raised in these regions. The women of these regions are also renowned for their weaving skills and are able to produce exquisite fabrics and thereby contribute to the family's income. Rural economy in these regions has also been boosted by the production of essential oils like turpentine and lemon grass.

In the eastern region of Bhutan live the Sharchops/ the Easterners - Shar being the word for 'east'. They refer to their dialect as Tshangla/ Shrachopa and they inhabit the regions of Mongar, Trashigang and Tashiyangtse, numbering roughly 138,000. Apart from these ethnic groups, in the Bhutanese highlands live the yak-herding pastoralists who call themselves Brokpas. They are to found in the region of Merak Sateng and they number about 5,000. While the Brokpas of Merak Sateng live along the eastern border of Bhutan, the north - west is occupied by yet another group of pastoralists – the Laya community. This community is a relatively smaller community, numbering just a few hundreds. Then there are the thousand odd jungle-dwelling Monpas who are to be found

in the Kheng and Mangdelung areas of Bhutan. The Lhops (Doyas) live in Derokha (Samtse District), and the Toktops belong to the Chukha Districts. The Bhutanese of Nepalese descent who occupy the southern regions of the country are known as the Lhotshampas and are as mentioned above of Nepalese origins. They include the Sherpas, Tamangs, Gurungs, Rais and Limbus (Tibeto-Burmese stock) and the Bahuns and Chettris of Indo-Nepalese family. The latter too being representatives of the Indian Brahmins and Kshatriyas. They are mostly Hindus while the Sherpas and Tamangs are Buddhists. They are excellent agriculturists and have contributed immensely to the economic development of southern Bhutan. The region they inhabit is well suited for the cultivation of rice, oranges and cardamom.

To the extreme north border of Bhutan between 6800 and 7400 metres above sea level is the northern region. This region is very sparsely populated and inhabited only till 5000m by yak herders. The blue poppy (national flower), the snow leopard, the takin (nation animal), the blue sheep, exquisite and rare butterflies and musk deer are all found in these high altitude areas. This region is comprised of the districts of Lingshi, Laya and Lunana and is inhabited by semi-nomadic herders who speak various dialects of Dzongkha. Barley and radish are the only crops that can be grown in these areas. In the winter the yak herders bring the yaks to graze in the surrounding pasturelands. Every autumn they trade the yak products for rice and salt and in the spring the herders and their animals head to the higher altitudes in search of greener pastures.

What must be remembered is that these subcultures or ethnic minorities as some would refer to them, also have distinctive life styles, their own languages/dialects and their own dress code. Let us now examine the dress code of some of these subcultures. Though these subcultures might have distinct dress codes, these dress codes often bear similarity with other cultures across the borders of Bhutan. For instance, the Monpas of Bhutan share historical, linguistic, religious, and weaving styles with the highland herders of Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh, India. Moreover, as Diana K Myers and Susan S Bean have mentioned at length in their book "From the Land of the Thunder Dragon, Textile Arts of Bhutan," the Monpas of Tawang and Bhutan also share similar physical features and dress code. The men and women of the Merak Sakteng region wear yak hair hats. While the men wear a red woollen jacket tied at the waist by a belt, the women wear a striped knee-length costume made of mild silk / shingkha. This knee-length attire is cut like a tunic and a belt is tied around the waist. Both the men and women wear boots. The men wear trousers under their woollen jackets, and the women wear a patterned jacket over their tunic dresses. The hat that the Monpas of Merak Sakteng wear distinguishes them from other sub-cultural groups.

The Lhops (Doyas), the Toktops and the Monpas of southern Trengsa district, wear similar clothes as the Lepchas of and Sikkim, in India. The Lepcha men wrap a piece of woven cloth around the body, “leaving one or both arms free, it reaches to the knee, and is gathered round the waist, its fabric is close, the ground color white, ornamented with longitudinal blue stripes, two or three fingers broad, prettily worked with red and white. In cold weather an upper garment with loose sleeves is added” [p.51]. The Lepcha women wear a garment around the body like a Bhutanese *Kira*, which is made of a “home-woven striped material, fastened over one shoulder with a brooch”. This garment is then tied with a belt and reaches the knees. This outfit is often adorned with a jacket, much like a Bhutanese women’s *Thegho*. Apart from the similarities in dress, the weaving techniques of the Bhutanese and the Lepcha women are similar as mentioned by Myers and Susan. Though most Bhutanese women wear the *Kira* particularly after it has been decreed the national dress of Bhutan, ethnic diversity in Bhutan may be visible in the distinctive outfits of women belonging to these subcultures.

We have talked about the clothing of the Lhops (Doyas), the Toktops and the Mongpas, let us take a very brief look at what the women of Laya wear. These women wear the blouses and woollen gowns that are tied at the waist with a belt. In the cold, they tie a striped blanket around the waist and it hangs below the waist. Over all these, the women also wear a long-sleeved jacket with a long sleeved blouse inside the jacket. The cuffs are turned back like the women do with the sleeves of the *Honju* and the *Thego*. They also wear knee length boots made of felt with soles of animal hide. Their conical bamboo hats are bought from the Kheng of southern Bhutan. They also adorn themselves with “heavy necklaces made of coral, turquoise, and zhi (black-and-white agate), and sometimes they pin their coats with the silver brooches used to fasten kira.” [p.117]. Apart from the attire of the women of Merak Sakteng that we have already described at length, the women of Merak Sakteng also wear a black woollen apron around their waist. This black woollen cloth is called the *tenga kema*. They carry a small round black cushion called a *kobtin*, which is made of “thick felted yak hair” and it dangles from a woollen tie at the women’s back. This black cushion / *kobtin* serves as a pad for them to sit on. The boots that these women wear are also made of black felt and is called *bidar*, the woven belt is called the *kichin* and the felt yak hair hat is called the *shamu*.

The women of Nepalese descent wear saris or wrap a sari around the lower part of their bodies, but with lots of pleats that hang down the front, and tuck the end of the sari into their waistbands to hold the ensemble in place. This is the *phariya* worn traditionally by older

Nepalese women. Some of these women also wrap a *lungi* around their waist. Over these lower garments the women wear a short-sleeved, tight fitting short blouse (*cholo*/akin to the sari blouse woven by Indian women) or a long-sleeved close-fitting longish blouse made of typical Nepalese cloth, that crosses over the chest (in the front) and is tied on the inside and the outside by small bows (called a *chowbandhi cholo*). Sometimes these women also wear a T-shirt over their *lungis/phariyas*, over which they wear a cardigan, rather than wear the short blouse/*cholo* or the *chowbandhi cholo*. However, most southern Bhutanese women have started wearing the *kira*.

We have talked about the subcultures that co-exist within mainstream Bhutanese culture. We have looked at the ethnicity of these subcultures, their dress codes, their language and the vegetation and chief agricultural products of their respective regions. Having talked about all this in considerable detail let us now look at how Bhutan could move towards development and promote the idea of a national culture despite all these cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversities and also move closer to the *Royal Government's* goal of attaining GNH.

A rich and diverse flourishing tradition of cultural arts exists in Bhutan. Bhutanese fine arts are all clubbed under the banner of *Zorig Chousum*. *Zo* means “to make”, *Rig* means “science” and *chusum* means “thirteen”. These 13 arts were codified at the end of the 17th century, during the reign of the 4th Temporal Ruler, *Tenzin Rabgye* (1680-1694). They are listed as follows:

- Wood Work / Shingzo
- Stone Work /Dozo
- Clay Crafts / Jinzo
- Bronze Casting/Lugzo
- Wood, Slate and Stone Carving / Parzo
- Painting/Lhazo
- Wood Turning / Shagzo
- Black Smithy/Garzo
- Silver and Gold Smithy / Troeko
- Bamboo and Cane Crafts/Tsharzo
- Paper Making/Dhezo
- Weaving/Thagzo
- Tailoring/Tshemzo

(The Living Religious and Cultural Traditions of Bhutan, p.9, (2001: New Delhi).

Traditional Bhutanese architecture is another area wherein the Kingdom's centuries old living and cultural heritage may be seen. The uniqueness of this indigenous form may be attributed to the topography, the climatic conditions, the sourcing of local construction materials, techniques and once again the guiding force of the religious beliefs of the land.

Examples of architectural feats are the Dzongs/Large Fortresses, Lhakhangs /Temples, Goenpas / Monasteries, Choetens / Stupas, Palaces, traditional wooden, iron and suspension bridges, residential houses and offices, which are all expressions of the living cultural traditions of Bhutan. Bhutanese architecture uses - rammed earth, bamboo, local timbers and stone as construction material. The most characteristic feature of traditional Bhutanese houses would be the use of wooden shingles held down by boulders that are used to provide the thatch of houses and the lack of iron nails used in hammering planks together. In Bhutan nails are finely made wooden pegs that serve the same function as metal nails. Wood is available and used in plenty in building traditional houses.

Apart from architecture and the other arts of Bhutan, religion inspires not only awe and faith amongst the followers of the *Buddhist Dhamma* but also art of an exquisite (sometimes) esoteric and religious nature. This spirituality may be observed in the objects of worship like the images of the various deities cast in bronze, copper, silver or even gold, the beautifully carved miniature *chortens*, the *phurba* / ritual daggers, the *Dorje* / thunderbolt, the *drilbu* / bell, the *damaru*/ hand drum, the *thoed nag* / skull drum with silver lining, the *dungchen* / long trumpet, the *jaling* / oboe, the *dungkar shogpacen* / conch shell and the *kangdung* / bone trumpet to name a few, and in the drawings and murals on the walls of *Lhaghangs* and *Goenpas*. Various types of *Khilkhors* / Mandalas adorn the walls of *Goenpas* and *Lhaghangs* throughout Bhutan, as do *thangkhas* / scroll paintings and *thongdrels*. The *tormas* made of parched barley flour and honey and decorated into designs in butter are another exquisite form of art meant to feed the Gods and the deities.

Bhutan's handicrafts are a class apart and once again a part of the living cultural tradition of Bhutan - the *Thokey* / fruit bowl, the *Tsamdeg* / Serving Bowl with a lid, the *Gelong Zhecha* / the Monk's Cup; the *Zaphop* / Burl Cup are a few examples of wooden handicrafts. The masks that are representative of the annual Tshechhu celebrations of Bhutan, the *Bangchu* / Round Bamboo Plates, silver artefacts like the *Chaka* / Betel Leaf and Areca Nut Box, the *Trini* / Round Lime container, the *Koma* / Brooches to hold the *Kira*, the *Jabtha* / Chain that supports the *Koma*, the *Dopchu* / Bracelets, and *Sirchu* / traditional earrings are just a few

examples. We have already talked about the textiles and the architecture of Bhutan. All these contribute to the cultural promotion and preservation agenda of the *Royal Government*. These artefacts stand out as the cultural signifiers of Bhutan are recognized all over the globe as belonging to Bhutan.

Not just handicrafts and textiles but Bhutanese folk songs, folklore, folk tales and the Buddhist tradition that exists in Bhutan have all contributed to Bhutan's unique culture. Most Asian cultures are self-preservatory cultures and the religious practices in these countries have been largely responsible for this unique frame of mind that ensures the protection of biodiversity and the ecology and the peaceful co-existence of humans and nature. These cultures teach their people to preserve their national heritage and culture, and teach them to respect each other's cultures. Had Bhutan decided to merely speed up economic development she could have exploited her natural resources ruthlessly and opened up the floodgates of tourism. But rather than give in to mere economic and material development, the *Royal Government* chose to preserve and promote cultural integration rather than garner mere economic prosperity. As *H E Lyonpo Jigime Y Thinley* mentioned in his keynote Address at Seoul in 1998, though these developmental projects related to the preservation of the environment and the promotion of culture cost more in the long run, the happiness of the nation makes it worth the while and the happiness of the nation is of utmost importance to the *Royal Government*.

Tourism is another aspect of Bhutan's culture that needs to be looked at, particularly in the manner in which the *Royal Government* has chosen to monitor it. Tourism can benefit developing nations through providing the much needed foreign exchange, required for payment of imports, by creating jobs, generating taxes, stimulating activity particularly in the commercial and industrial sectors of the economy, fostering foreign and local investment and capital formation. All these factors could also contribute to international understanding and peace and respect for other cultures. But on the negative side, tourism that is unplanned and controlled largely by outsiders (this would happen in cases where market economies are opened up post liberalization), could lead to over crowding in tourist areas. Urbanization could become too rapid which in turn would create other problems of immigration, housing, health, family welfare and basic development and becomes a burden on the urban centres infrastructure. Even a relatively simple thing like urban migration can lead to a change in the working and the set up of traditional societies. These changes are three-folds: (a) "among the members of the home community," (b) "among the urban migrants themselves," and (c) "within the urban host community to which the

migrants go.” (Nancy B. Graves and Theodore D Graves, (1974), “Adaptive Strategies in Urban Migration,” – In *Annual Review of Anthropology: Bernard J Siegel; (Ed), pp. 117 – 51, Palo Alto, California: Annual Reviews*).

It could upset the balance between those people left at home, between those who have migrated to urban and commercial sectors and even between those who are already urban dwellers and the new immigrants from the towns and villages. When this happens, it could create problems as listed earlier in this section and that in turn would affect the welfare of the public and ultimately work against the grain of GNH. It could also lead to labour shortages in non-tourism sectors. Another negative side effect of tourism is the age-old profession of prostitution and other demoralizing forms of flesh trade (this is to be seen particularly in Bangkok, Thailand). It could also lead to hostility towards tourists’ affluence and an increase in crime and violence. Tourism has both negative and positive points and the Royal Government has taken care to see that the negative side effects of tourism do not tarnish the cultural heritage of Bhutan. Hence, Bhutan has very strict rules and regulations regarding tourism and the entry of foreigners into Bhutan. For instance the number of tourists who may be in the country on any particular day is specified and the rate the tourists pay per night for staying in the country is also very high. In this manner effective checks have been imposed on the tour operators to abide by the government rules and on the tourists themselves who are briefed on the code of conduct/behaviour they are supposed to follow when in Bhutan.

In places like Bali, Indonesia, tourism has been known to support and re-affirm cultural identities by reviving respecting for traditional art forms, but at other times tourism can also degrade and parody cultural differences, and lead to envy for western goods and or western life style, and may even intensify cross – cultural conflicts. The negative aspect of Tourism is that it “remains a statement of fundamental inequality. Whereby the ‘haves’ can travel half-way around the world for pleasure, while the ‘have knots’ struggles for subsistence beneath their noses.” (*Callimano Pulos 1982; 5, Dominique – The Tourist Trap – Introduction, Cultural Survival Quarterly, 6: 3-5*). However, tourism has its economic benefits, but these benefits do not go to local people. Even when tourism increases the inflow of hard currency, a lot of that money is spent in ordering and importing things that tourist want but are not available locally. Tourism also inevitably results in harm to the environment, some of it being irreversible. Even though tourism creates jobs initially, many of these are low-skilled jobs in the service sector of tourism and not in more productive sectors of development where labour can make a positive contribution. From a cultural perspective, tourism is basically fantasy selling – which involves turning a traditional culture into a spectacle for the benefit of a tourist audience. Tourism is like any other

form of social change. When introduced gradually and controlled by local people, it serves indigenous needs and improves some aspects of life but, if left unchecked and in the hands of mere mercenaries then, tourism could destroy not only the cultural heritage but the environment and in short the whole ecosystem, leaving behind in its aftermath various perceptible and imperceptible changes. Once again going against the whole concept of GNH.

Finally, addressing the question of what constitutes happiness might be a useless endeavour. As mentioned earlier – happiness is relative, it would mean different things to different people and could mean different things to the same over different periods of time. Hence even trying to figure out the main ingredients of happiness would be a futile exercise. For the poor happiness could mean good health facilities, free education for their children and enough to survive. In any case object poverty is unknown in Bhutan. Moreover the government has provided free education to all her people from kinder garden to graduation and further studies. And this education is not of a mediocre or poor quality it is of a very high standard and Bhutanese students are at par with students everywhere else. Health care is another important area of social welfare and development. There are 26 odd hospitals, 145 Basic Health Units and around 450 out reach clinics that cover the length and the breadth of the country. Out reach clinics are health facilities in remote areas. These clinics are usually visited once a month by medically trained staff. Thus, enabling quick and preventive treatment, rather than the patient having to travel miles from far-off, remote places. In this way two of the basic requirements of human life are met with adequately by the efforts of the *Royal Government of Bhutan*. It should be noted that there are no private nursing homes or private practice of any sort as far as the medical profession is concerned in Bhutan. All the medical doctors of Bhutan are government employees and all are motivated towards a common goal. In case of need doctors from other countries are employed on contractual basis but medical services are not something the government would allow anyone to mess with. Basic health coverage in Bhutan is more than 90% and life expectancy too has been increased considerably over the years.

There are more than 300 schools throughout Bhutan and the Royal Government has allowed a limited number of private schools to operate in Bhutan. The department of Education is responsible for monitoring these private schools. Bhutan has a very powerful vision. This vision has evolved from her unique historical and geographical positioning and this paper does in fact agree with Stefan Priesner's view. It has evolved from her self-imposed isolation from the rest of the modern "western" world and from her deep-rooted sense of religious values. Out of these and a sense of respect towards elders, towards religious artefacts towards the

environment and respect for one another – Bhutan has emerged with her unique concept of GNH.

The Policy makers of Bhutan were far-sighted enough to realize that too sudden a change or too drastic a step towards modernization and a change to technological innovations could destroy the cultural system of Bhutan as has been known to happen. Modernization is the process by which traditional societies adopt technological advancements and socio-cultural systems characteristic of industrialized nations. Modernization includes advanced machine technology, industrialization of the production process, urbanization, a market economy, centralized and bureaucratic structures of political administration, a growth of non-kinship social groupings, and an attitude that favours innovation and change. With modernization and new machine technology and scientific knowledge added to the production process, changes occur in the traditional patterns of work. These in turn lead to an increase in occupational specialization, the separation of production from kinship units and the substitution of cash wages for traditional forms of exchange. These lead to social inequalities and serve to widen the gap between the various social classes, as everyone does not realize the benefits of technology equally even within the same society. Modernization and technologically innovation lead traditional economies from subsistence economies to market economies. Market economies also involve commercialisation of exchange and the use of all- purpose money. The same market economies and networks spread throughout the country and remote corners of the country as well. Even in these remote and far- flung parts people need hard currency for trading in the market economy, and by commercialising agriculture they are able to obtain much needed hard currency.

Political modernization in Bhutan may be related to the devolvement of full executive powers by **H M the King** to his Council of Ministers, and the de-centralization of powers right down to the grass roots level- village headman/*Gup*. From whatever we have seen so far, we may safely conclude that **HM King Jigme Singye Wangchuk** and the *Royal Government* of Bhutan have taken care to ensure that the people of Bhutan are well taken care of. Technology has been adopted degree by degree in a well- planned manner so as to reap maximum benefits from its adoption. Quality education and health facilities are provided free of cost to all Bhutanese. While sub-cultures have the freedom to observe their own cultural practices, and to follow their own religions, all that the *Royal Government* asks of their people is that they remain united under the same banner of one culture, one language and one dress code. Since abject poverty is unknown in Bhutan and all other aspects of social welfare are taken care of by the *Royal Government*, and the Bhutanese

are basically a free nation and a free people, they do not really have any cause for complaints. In comparison to their largest and closest neighbour India, average Bhutanese are better taken care of, their basic necessities of life are all met by the *Royal Government*. India has a population of over a billion people and more than 60 % of her population live below the poverty line, education and health care are luxuries for the rich alone and parts of the country are often engulfed in instances of communal violence and inter-religious clashes and riots. From an outsider's point of view, lay Bhutanese should be a happy lot. It should be remembered that while the framers of the policies cannot take into account individual quest for happiness they can strive to govern the society properly, taking care of the people as one nation and one culture.

Having said all this let me sum up the entire argument as proposed in the abstract. Beginning with the unique concept of GNH, this paper has proposed to examine the concept of GNH and the contributions of the four key objectives identified by the *Royal Government*. The paper has defined culture and sought to look at what constitutes Bhutanese mainstream culture. It has also looked at the diversities in the sub-cultures of Bhutan and has examined and analysed the reasons why the *Royal Government* sought to adopt a national language and a national culture. The paper has also made an attempt at addressing the question of why and how cultures change and how the decision of the *Royal Government* regarding the promotion and preservation of culture has come at the right time. The paper has concluded that cultural preservation and promotion would not be detrimental to national unity, but would serve to unite the country. Not only would it serve to keep the kingdom of Bhutan's cultural heritage intact but would also contribute to the concept of GNH. Other papers in the past have examined the preservation of the environment, economic self reliance and good governance, the way the author of this paper sees it, cultural promotion could contribute positively to GNH as it serves to unite the people and the country. And when the people of a country unite and think of themselves as one people, one culture inhabiting one land/ country, and therefore, one nation, they would put aside their individual differences, desires and strive to attain the national goal of GNH. Through cultural promotion and preservation the people of Bhutan could start thinking along the lines of "nationhood" and "nationalism" and these thought processes would dictate the course of action – not only the national action but also individual action which in turn could revolutionize the entire stream of thought and action. Once that happens, Bhutan would be a truly happy nation – here by happy, the author of this paper is implying having attained the goals of GNH. For then the country would be on the path to economic self-reliance, would have been working in tandem with the ecosystem and would also have adopted serious

measures towards the preservation and promotion of her cultural heritage. Lastly, it should be remembered that all these developmental activities would have taken place as a result of good governance. It should be remembered throughout that the *Royal Family*, the *Royal Government* or the framers of policies cannot take into account individual quest for satisfaction and happiness. What they can do is to do their duty with diligence, sincerity and to strive towards good governance and taking care of the welfare of the nation. All they can do is to try and take care of the people of Bhutan as one nation and one culture and to lead the country into the global economy with well planned out and continuous steps. In this entire scheme of things we have talked about at considerable length what the Royal Government can do for the promotion of GNH. But what about the people of Bhutan? What can the people of Bhutan do towards helping their government attain the powerful vision of GNH? They can strive to be better citizens, more responsible for their actions, thoughts, words and deeds and work in tandem with the *Royal Government* to fulfil this vision and to make it a reality. Finally, even though by its very nature, happiness is an objective concept, which does not allow itself to either scientific analysis or assessment, this paper has sought to try and analyse what the larger meaning of happiness is and has concluded that happiness *per se* is neither the issue under discussion nor the answer to this vision. It is the powerful idea of what happiness could mean in the larger context. That is what GNH is really about.

Bhutan's Quadrilemma: To Join or Not To Join the WTO, That is the Question *By Mark Mancall*

Abstract

This paper argues that any discussion of the operationalization of Gross National Happiness (GNH) in Bhutan within an immediate or intermediate time-frame must account for the fact that operationalization implies the adoption of long-range policy objectives and immediate or intermediate policy decisions, made in real time, that aim at reaching those objectives. The discussion of any operationalization of GNH, therefore, cannot fruitfully take place *in abstracto*, because that implies a lack of seriousness in raising the subject in the first place. The paper seeks to outline, only briefly and suggestively, a framework within which discussion of the operationalization of GNH may take place, focusing on the question of Bhutan's possible entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO). It concludes that a decision to operationalize GNH in Bhutan carries with it certain consequences that can be defined within the structure of the problem of choice, and that structure can best be considered as a quadrilemma. The *potential* consequences of choice must be taken into account in choosing for any particular set of policy directions and the *potential* cost must be accepted as part of the solution of the problem the quadrilemma suggests.

Bhutan's policy objectives within the framework of GNH

We may assume that the word "development" best defines Bhutan's long-range objective, but it is precisely the meaning of this term for Bhutan, and the policies and policy decisions needed to achieve that objective once it is defined, that the concept of GNH is intended to cover. Therefore, we must try to indicate, if only in the most general terms, what the components of GNH-guided development may be. We can assume, for the purpose of this argument, that they are five in number:

Eradication of poverty. Poverty in absolute terms suggests a level of income, in cash and/or kind, beneath which a reasonable standard of living, as defined by the values of a society, cannot be sustained. Obviously, GNH not only needs to consider what constitutes "poverty" in Bhutan but also what phenomena it covers. For example, it may ask who defines "poverty" in Bhutan and what institutions are engaged in the definition. It may consider whether a concept of "spiritual poverty" or "cultural poverty" is part of the definition of the condition of poverty in Bhutan. In brief, GNH certainly suggests the need to define the term in

specifically Bhutanese terms. Relative poverty implies a spread of income that is too great to be sustained either by the values of the society or the institutions of the polity. The eradication of poverty within the framework of GNH thought suggests, therefore, at least the possibility that the measures usually adopted to alleviate poverty as defined by strictly economic models may not be completely or even primarily applicable in Bhutan. For example, some models of development (China, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, for example), based development on state-enforced forced savings, primarily from the peasants, and the State's police powers were used to prevent deviation from this policy. In other societies, great disparity of income, often accompanied by equally great corruption, was maintained by the oppressive police power of the State (Indonesia under Suharto was an example). Neither possibility is acceptable under GNH. The operationalization of GNH, then, denies certain even temporary justifications for the continuation of poverty and requires the state to eradicate poverty by changing the conditions that give rise to it or allow it to continue.

Preservation of national sovereignty. National sovereignty may be defined as the ability of a national polity to determine for itself, by whatever means it chooses, the policies, institutions, and procedures whereby its population lives within its boundaries. Obviously there are always limitations on sovereignty, including, for example, relative power internationally, geographical considerations (e.g., limits on the use of resources, such as rivers, that are shared across national boundaries), international political and economic obligations, etc. While national sovereignty may not be measurable as an absolute quantity (except negatively, when one nation is completely incorporated into another), a nation's ability to expand or diminish the reach or depth of its sovereignty is always a trade-off in terms of other factors or values that must be addressed in the formulation of policy.

Maintenance and development of culture. While it is true that social scientists have never succeeded in defining "culture," it remains something that everyone can perceive when he or she sees it. Cultures are malleable, which in this instance means that they change, sometimes more rapidly, sometimes less rapidly, depending on decisions that are made by a nation through its institutions and on the historical circumstances within which a nation may find itself and which limit its ability to make independent decisions regarding its culture. The degree to which the development of a culture may be influenced by political or economic decisions depends on the policy directions a nation takes in fields ranging from education to the economy. While GNH envisages the use of culture to protect the integrity of the nation, it also posits the development of Bhutanese culture as an instrument for defense.

“National identity,” therefore, beyond its definition on legal documents, is a significant variable both in the formulation and the consequences of policy decisions.

Good governance, democratization and decentralization. Good governance is one of the objectives of GNH, and, according to prevailing ideas, that objective is best served by decentralization and democratization. Good governance assumes that the stakeholders in a society hold the policy- and decision-makers accountable, and this, in turn, assumes the ability of all the stakeholders to participate in the process of policy formation and to evaluate the decisions that are made in pursuit of those policies. In general this means that an educated and informed population can exercise its judgment on the managers of society, through whatever mechanisms a given society establishes for that purpose. It also assumes, however, the existence within that society of a shared set of values, norms, and standards on the basis of which the population can judge its managers. GNH is about values, norms, and standards, but it is also about education for participation (as well as about making a living).

Self-determination. Good governance and self-determination are closely linked concepts. Without good governance self-determination may be the exercise of the will of a small group that holds concentrated power in its hands, power that it exercises on behalf of the society but without accountability to the society as a whole. There is a dilemma here, of course: The freedom of the state to act independently, and in the contemporary world to act quickly, sometimes requires, or seems to require, that it be able to act without direct reference to the society on behalf of which it is operating. Accountability may be delayed until after, sometimes long after, action has been taken, by which time the introduction of other issues or forgetfulness diminishes the degree of accountability. This is a dilemma of representative democracy in the contemporary world, for example.

The operationalization of Gross National Happiness is an issue precisely because it is by no means clear that the commonly accepted definition of “development” satisfies the needs of poverty eradication, the maintenance or even the increase of national sovereignty, the maintenance and development of Bhutanese culture, good governance, and self-determination.

General and specific limitations on freedom of policy choice

Bhutan’s ability to make policy choices in the pursuit of Gross National Happiness may be defined or even limited by both general system considerations and specific characteristics of the nation.

General considerations. Although we like to think that we make decisions in a world in which our decisions are made in a mono-directional fashion, that is, decisions and consequences are identified by a close cause-effect relationship, we are increasingly aware of the problem of unintended effects, which is to say that a given policy decision may lead to a quite different consequence than the one we intended. The fact of the matter is that we live in a highly complex and very integrated socioeconomic universe, which we divide into domains (“disciplines”) for the sake of analysis, but these domains disappear as distinct entities when we look more closely at the political economy. Any decision we make in one area may have quite unintended consequences far from the domain in which the original decision was made. The introduction of new technology may lead to social change that may result in increasing political dissatisfaction in a significant element of the population, or even in the production of a new social class, which, in turn, may result in revolutionary seizure of power. New inventions and ways of doing business that, collectively, we call the “Industrial Revolution” were not intended to produce an urban middle class in France that would seize political power and create a new political system.

Specific considerations. Although the specificities of Bhutan’s situation are well known, it is important to rehearse them here in order to highlight the complexities of choice that face the society.

1. Bhutan is a small state. Bhutan appears on almost every list (World Bank, IMF, Commonwealth Secretariat) of “small states,” a category sometimes defined as “states with populations of less than 1.5 million people.” It is not possible here to discuss the characteristics that distinguish small states from all the others, but they suggest that small states are so different from the states on which the traditional models of economic development are based that they require a different analysis and different solutions to the problems presented by “development.” They are highly vulnerable to external events, have small domestic markets, have very limited capacity in the public and private sectors, are relatively undiversified in their production and exports, etc. These conditions limit Bhutan’s choices in the pursuit of development and require different solutions. The operationalization of GNH, with its strong adoption of specific goals and values, further narrows the choice of “development strategies” by requiring and even insisting on profoundly humanizing both the definition and the process of development.

2. Bhutan is a “developing” society. That Bhutan is a less-developed economy or society is not arguable. If “development” means “improvement,” the question of the realization of development very much depends on the values to which the society accords importance. That

Bhutan lacks the resources to “develop” in all sectors at the same time is a given, but then this is also the case with advanced industrial societies such as the United States. From the point of view of resources, all resources are scarce and so choice must be made, no less in Bhutan than in North America. The fact that Bhutan still has the ability to decide which path it wishes to pursue, which means to determine its own priorities (to the extent that it does indeed have that ability), suggests that in a way Bhutan can benefit at this stage in its history from its “underdeveloped” condition to expand its ability to exercise choice, albeit with certain limitations, to which we will come.

3. Bhutan has limited resources. The nation’s capacity to grow exports or to speed-up domestic economic development is limited by its lack of resources, including “natural” resources, capital, labor, etc. Whatever measures are taken to overcome this lack in one area will have consequences in other areas, as we will suggest.

4. Bhutan is a landlocked country. Landlocked countries experience particular difficulties in gaining access to world markets, which is a limitation on their ability to use trade as a way to overcome the limitation of resources. Moreover, Bhutan’s neighbors are only two in number, one of which is relatively unavailable to Bhutan as a resource for trade and development.

5. Bhutan is deeply integrated with the Indian economy. To the extent that Bhutan seeks to deepen its integration with the global economy as an instrument for its own development (even given the conditions already mentioned), it is limited by the extent of its already existing integration with the Indian economy. Considerations of relative political power and size of economies severely condition Bhutan’s ability to engage itself with the global market.

Bhutan’s WTO quadrilemma

Operationalization of Gross National Happiness will require very difficult policy choices in the short- and intermediate term that will have long-term consequences. The difficulty of these choices can be indicated by a discussion of the quadrilemma Bhutan faces in consideration of the value and significance of its joining the WTO.

A quadrilemma may be defined as a state that requires a choice between four relatively equal or attractive options, any combination of two or three of which will prove unsatisfactory with regard to one or two of the others. In other words, “you can’t have your cake and eat it too.” The decision about whether to join the WTO poses a *quadrilemma* because there are four primary elements that must be taken into account but that may be, to some extent, mutually incompatible at some level. These

elements are: globalization (meaning, thereby, real and “deep” integration into the global market; the continuing development and continued existence of the nation-state, in this case Bhutan; the development of a decentralized and democratic polity; and the pursuit of Gross National Happiness as an objective and a guide to development choices.

Globalization and the nation-state. It is now a commonplace to point out that globalization as a process of economic integration on a global scale has a long history, extending at least as far back as the 18th century, let us say, and that that history is not unilinear, i.e., there have been periods of increasing and of decreasing global economic integration.

In the last decade or so, “globalization” has often been presented, ahistorically, as a new phenomenon and, ideologically, as a phenomenon that is somehow “natural,” i.e., that is somehow propelled by the forces of nature so that either you join or you get left by the wayside. Only lately, and partly as a result of intellectual critiques and analyses of “globalization” and of political and social protests against it, has globalization been considered as something less than a natural force.

World Wars I and II demonstrated the consequences of a totally fragmented world in which individual states or nation-states were pursuing their own political and economic objectives without serious consideration being given to the broader welfare of the world community. World War I led to the creation of institutions intended to control, or at least soften, the consequences of international competition and to economic theories and policies that would soften the consequences of a relatively unbridled market. World War II was, to no small extent, the consequence of the failure of the institutions and policies that followed World War I. Consequently, after World War II two sets of institutions were created that, it was hoped, would prevent the rise again of those conditions that had led to World War II. Those institutions were The United Nations and its ancillary and associated bodies, and the Bretton Woods institutions, namely the World Bank, the IMF, and the GATT (replacing the failed ITO).

Both sets of institutions were predicated on the need to mediate between the nation-state, as the primary political unit and the primary unit of economic planning, on the one hand, and, on the other, the need to integrate the nation-state and national economies into a larger whole that would make possible the control, and alleviation, of the excesses of the nation-state and of national economies.

The United Nations rested on giving priority to collective security and decisions made collectively by member nations through the UN’s

institutions. The UN was intended to provide sufficient international security so that the nation-state could continue to function with only minimal restrictions on its sovereignty while its sovereignty was limited to the extent that the collective interest of the whole inhibited its exercise of independence to the point where it seriously infringed on other nation-states. While the UN's history has been checkered by moments of success and by failures, its fundamental premise has only recently come under direct attack. The UN has held out at least the promise of security for small states in the face of potentially predatory larger neighbors, and the consequences of the failure or even the weakening of the UN for small states would be serious indeed.

The institutions of the "Bretton Woods Compromise" are more to our point, however. At the end of World War II, it was commonly recognized that the world consisted of states and nation-states that differed from each other, sometimes radically, in ideology, social policy, socioeconomic systems, levels of development, national purpose, institutional structures and political processes. Moreover, each state had its own political procedures for arriving at policy determinations. If peace were to be preserved (even in the midst of the Cold War) and stability maintained, differences had to be mediated rather than overcome, and the Bretton Woods institutions were created for that purpose. To be sure, there was a preference for democracy (not surprising after the anti-Fascist war), but it was rooted in the idea that diversity of political, social and economic arrangements could be tolerated and preserved by the development of institutions that encouraged growth and attended to the alleviation of crises that might otherwise weaken the stability of the international system. The GATT was intended to provide a procedural framework within which the adjustment of the institutions and procedures could take place to account for change.

The Bretton Woods compromise began to fall apart at the beginning of the 1980s with the Thatcher government in Great Britain and the Reagan administration in the United States. The idea of mediation between states with their own arrangements gave way to the idea of the market as the over-determining institution to which the nation-state had to acquiesce if it were to develop, or even to survive. The market trumped any and all domestic arrangements within individual nation-states. Moreover, the market was assumed to be a self-controlling mechanism. All this was legitimated by the fall of the Soviet Union and the supposed turn of China away from "socialism" to "capitalism." The WTO, replacing the GATT in 1995, was the institutional expression of the new "globalization." It is supposed to provide a means for negotiating the acquiescence of individual nation-states to the world market, but the "conditionalities" which surround any given nation-state's entry into the world market are, both logically and politically, only temporary; the

inexorable power of the world market will dissolve them in due course. The crucial difference between the Bretton Woods institutions and the WTO is contained in the difference between mediation and acquiescence. The first real indication that this inexorable power could be challenged came at Seattle in 1999, and the first real challenge occurred at Cancun in 2003.

Entrance into the WTO holds out the promise, theorists say, of rapid local (nation-state) development in return for the surrender of a considerable amount of local autonomy. The ability of the nation state to define its own path to improving the conditions of its population, and even to define what “improvement” means and in what domains it should take place, is surrendered to the global market. Sovereignty is transformed, and diminished, by adhesion to the WTO.

Here, then, are two parts of the quadrilemma that both in theory and in reality are mutually incompatible. Accession to the WTO severely limits the domestic independence of the nation-state in precisely those areas where it needs to be effective to survive, namely in the political, social, and economic spheres. As we have seen recently, the WTO, particularly its most powerful members, can attempt to place limits even on independence in medical (pharmaceutical) and intellectual (TRIPS) areas.

Good governance and a democratic polity. Both globalization (the WTO) and GNH posit “good governance” as a *sine qua non* for development of any kind. “Good governance” is usually interpreted to mean, as we said above, the ability of the stakeholders to hold policy formulators and decision makers accountable for their policy formulations and decisions. This raises temporal as well as procedural issues. Temporally, integration into the WTO may take place in such a way and at such a time that the stakeholders are either not part of the decision for integration or that holding the policy makers to account can take place only after the fact, when the decision to enter is irreversible or its consequences irredeemable. In other words, the concept of good governance can be nullified by the decision to enter the WTO, which supports, theoretically, good governance. Furthermore, once the nation-state has acceded to the WTO, large areas of its traditional domains of independent action are no longer available to it and are thus removed from the reach of good governance.

Gross National Happiness. To the extent that GNH pursues development objectives that are different from, or are serious modifications of, the more narrowly economic, definitions of development objectives that the WTO recognizes, and to the extent that the WTO, and the World Bank and IMF, which have become participants in the new, post-Bretton Woods dispensation, limit the ability of the state

to pursue happiness socially, politically and economically in terms that GNH defines and through institutions and procedures that GNH creates, GNH and the WTO appear to be incompatible, at least to some extent. For example, if GNH requires that the state manage the economy, whether it be public or private or some mix of the two, to that extent arrangements that are predicated on the independence of the economy and on its self-regulation contradict GNH. GNH posits the preservation and development of the national culture as both a purpose and an instrument for the preservation of national sovereignty. Minimally controlled international trade, however, which is the immediate goal of the WTO, may require allowing the importation of goods that will have a severe impact on the national culture. To that extent GNH and the WTO may be mutually contradictory.

The Quadrilemma. Bhutan, like any developing nation, faces an extraordinarily complex decision concerning the WTO. The four components of the decision carry some degree of mutual incompatibility. There is no question that joining the WTO may be beneficial, in one way or another, to Bhutan's economic development, at least as development is narrowly defined in economic terms. However, membership has its costs. The sovereignty of the Bhutanese state will be diminished and compromised. Given the already existing degree of economic integration with India, it cannot be determined beforehand if the value gained from WTO membership will exceed the value already gained from the degree of economic integration between Bhutan and India. As Dani Rodrik puts it, deep economic integration places the nation-state in a "golden straightjacket." The quality of the gold remains in question.

Membership in the WTO and the globalization of Bhutan's economy may also restrict the degree to which Bhutan can pursue good governance, one of the objectives of GNH. Furthermore, the decision to join the WTO and submit to the disciplines of the World Bank, the IMF, etc., cannot be made democratically or in consultation with the Bhutanese stakeholders because neither the mechanisms nor the educational level necessary for such consultation exists at this time. Unless and until the WTO itself becomes a body characterized by good governance, the diminution of good governance within Bhutan in exchange for the benefits to be gained from accepting the discipline of the WTO and its associated institutions cannot be compensated. A "global federalism," deeper than, but perhaps patterned on, the "Bretton Woods compromise," is highly unlikely in any foreseeable future, given the reluctance of the world's sole super-power, and a host of second tier powers, to surrender a significant degree of sovereignty to world bodies.

The surrender of sovereignty by small states, for example the loss of the ability to forbid or even control imports, will inevitably undermine

national culture as the nation's economy becomes more and more globalized. The "westernization" or "North Americanization" of Bhutanese culture will be propelled forward at a faster rate than might otherwise be the case, particularly given the condition that Bhutanese culture itself has to be deepened and strengthened through education, the humanities, consciousness of values, etc., to be able even to begin to withstand the onslaught of international trade borne-cultural change.

The pursuit of GNH depends upon the affirmation and reinforcement of Bhutan's ability to exercise self-determination in the positing of long-range objectives, short- and intermediate-range policy decisions, and the development of the institutions and values in which those long-range objectives will be embedded and the procedures through which they will be realized. WTO membership weakens and diminishes national self-determination institutionally, procedurally, and culturally.

None of this is to suggest that membership in the WTO will not bring significant advantages to Bhutan. Perhaps those advantages will be judged to be potentially of such a magnitude and quality that Bhutan should cut through the quadrilemma like Alexander the Great cut the Gordian's knot. The magnitude and complexity of the decision is in ratio to Bhutan's present stage of development and the fixed reality of its size and power vis-à-vis the WTO itself and its neighbors. In any event, the fate of the operationalization of Gross National Happiness lies at the very center of this decision.

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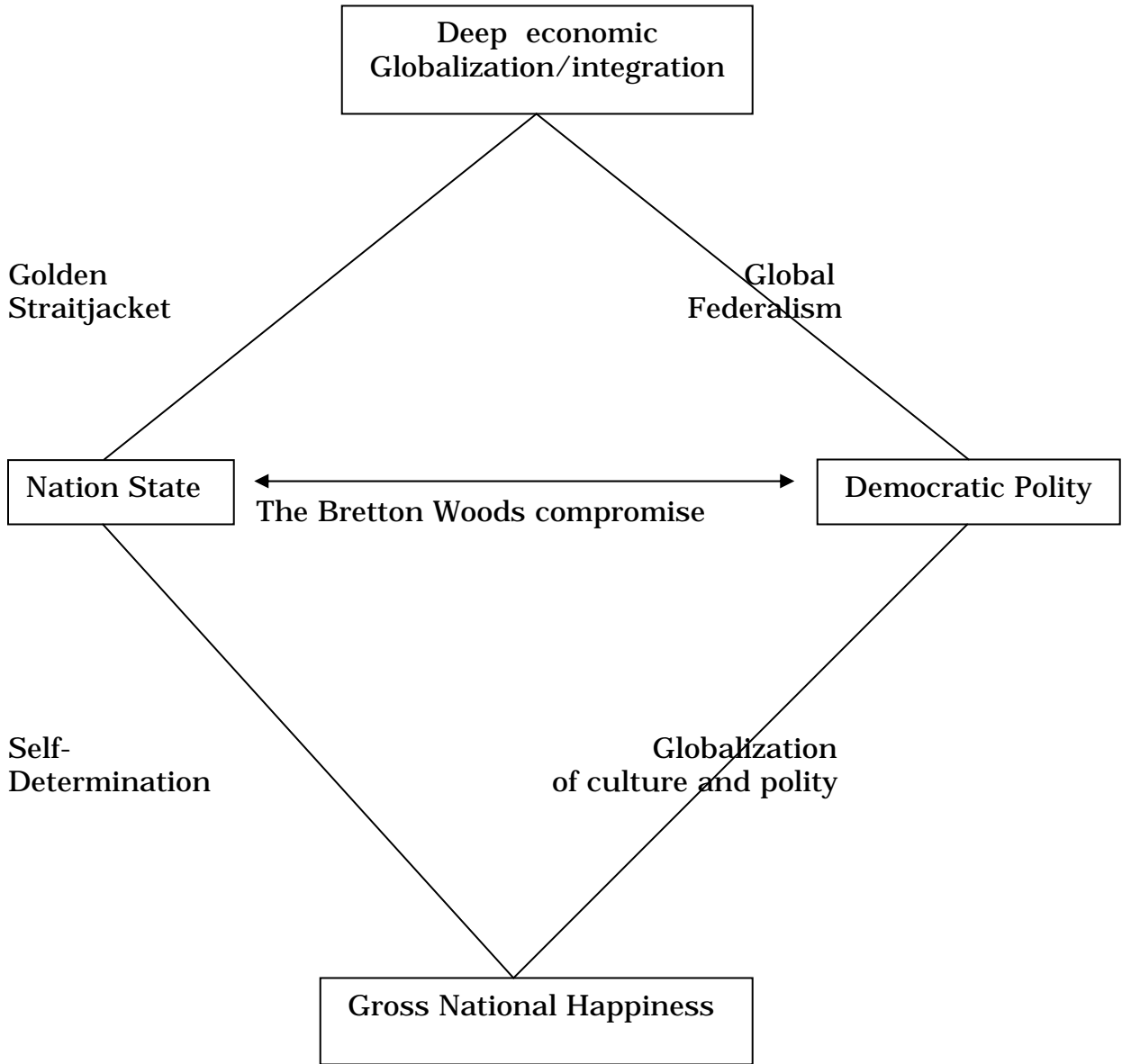
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The Bhutanese Quadrilemma



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Achieving Happiness: Personal Transformation and Cultural Transformation *By Joan Schafer*

We all start life equipped for survival with roughly the same set of basic human instincts. We know how to suckle; we know how to cry when we are hungry; we know how to grow and develop, and we do all this instinctively without thinking. As we get older, we overlay these instincts with a set of *subconscious beliefs* about what it takes to survive, to feel emotionally safe, and to experience a sense of self-worth in the close personal world of our family. Like instincts, subconscious beliefs generate actions that precede thought. Whenever we react viscerally to a situation, we are experiencing the presence of a subconscious belief.

During these first years of life, our young minds, which have not yet developed the skills to think logically, are vulnerable to suggestion. We also lack the emotional skills necessary to express our needs, and we lack the courage to confront those on whom we are dependent for our survival, safety and self-esteem, if our needs are not being met. So, we do the best we can to feel safe, to find protection and to be loved within the life conditions that are defined by our parents and siblings.

The subconscious beliefs we learn during this period very often stay with us for the rest of our lives. If the family dynamics in which we are brought up are in anyway dysfunctional – an authoritarian father, a fearful mother, a jealous sibling – then we will find the beliefs we subconsciously inculcate may also be dysfunctional, and may very likely come back to haunt us later in life. We subconsciously learn dysfunctional, fear-based beliefs when we are unable to satisfy our innate needs for survival, safety, love, and respect within the family environment.

As we get older and learn the communication skills necessary to interact with our family and the world around us, we overlay our instincts and subconscious beliefs with a set of *conscious beliefs* about what it takes to survive, to be safe, and to feel good about ourselves, not only inside the family, but also in our peer groups, and the cultural and physical environment in which we live.

Unlike subconscious beliefs that lead to actions that precede thought, conscious beliefs lead to actions that follow thought. Conscious beliefs allow us to determine how best to meet our unmet needs through logic.

We have time to think before we respond. Subconscious beliefs don't give us time to think. They cause us to react before thinking. They are deeply engrained energetic responses concerning the past hurt we feel about our unmet childhood needs. Reacting is the domain of subconscious beliefs, responding is the domain of conscious beliefs. Are you reacting or responding? Once you know the difference you will be able to identify your dysfunctional, fear-based beliefs.

Our conscious beliefs are molded to a great extent by the cultural belief systems that belong to the society into which we are born. They are reflected in the beliefs that affect the dynamics of family life, the beliefs that affect gender relationships, the beliefs that affect caste or class, the beliefs that affect our institutions, the beliefs that affect our laws, the beliefs that affect business, and the beliefs that affect our social interactions. These in turn are molded by the cultural history and the physical life conditions of the ethnic group to which we belong. They may also be molded by a dominant religious group – more on this topic later.

By the time we reach maturity, we have developed a unique personality based on the subconscious and conscious beliefs that we learned as part of our personal, cultural, and environmental conditioning. During our adult years we may learn some new beliefs, and we may modify some of our existing beliefs. We may also learn, from the feedback we receive from others and the support of friends and counselors, how to identify and release the subconscious fear-based beliefs that we learned during childhood that are limiting our effectiveness or are causing dysfunction or pain or in our adult lives. These fear-based beliefs are always related to the subconscious beliefs we learned from our early childhood experiences with regard to survival and abandonment, belonging and rejection, and respect and abuse. The degree to which we had difficulty in satisfying our needs for survival, safety, love and respect during childhood is very often a good indicator of the level of subconscious, dysfunctional, fear-based beliefs that affect us in adult life.

Personal Transformation

The aspect of our personality that is conditioned by the conscious and subconscious beliefs that we learn as children and as young adults is called the ego. The ego always reasons in terms of "I" and is motivated by the personal self-interest regarding survival, belonging and self-worth. The ego can be defined as:

"the center of consciousness that identifies with the body and regards itself a separate physical self,"

There is also another aspect of our personality sitting in the background, waiting to be activated once we have released the ego's fear-based beliefs concerning survival, belonging and self-worth. This is called the soul. The soul is motivated by finding meaning, making a difference and being of service to others or other life forms on the planet. The soul can be defined as,

“the center of consciousness that identifies with spirit and sees itself connected to everything”.

Spirit can be defined as, *“the life force or energy that animates all entities, both organic and non-organic.”* This is the energy I refer to in later chapters as Zero-Point Energy Field. It is the energy that leaves the physical body when we die.

The soul always reasons in terms of “we” and is motivated by the collective interest or enlightened self-interest.

When individuals operate from ego consciousness, they focus their attention on the needs they perceive are necessary for survival and safety, for belonging and being loved, and for being respected and feeling a sense of self-worth. The degree to which we focus on these needs depends to a significant extent on our experiences of growing up. If our parents had difficulty in satisfying these needs, or we had difficulty satisfying them for ourselves, we subconsciously attempt to satisfy them in our adult lives. Thus, any fears we hold about the satisfaction of these needs, such as “I am not safe”, “I am not loved”, or “I am not good enough,” will underlie the dynamics of our day-to-day behaviors in our adult lives.

The degree of “I-ness” expressed by the ego is modified by the degree of “we-ness” the ego believes is necessary to sustain survival, prevent abandonment, feel loved, and be respected by family members, peers or those in a position of authority. This form of “we-ness” is based on our ego's need for physical and emotional safety. When an individual grows up feeling safe and protected, but no matter how hard they try whatever they do is never good enough for their parents, they become dependent on others for their self-esteem, and become over achievers in later life. The factor that unites all the fears held by the ego is that they are dependency based – dependency on others for safety, protection or self-esteem, dependency on alcohol or drugs to dull the pain of not feeling safe, loved or respected, or dependency on religion for the assurance of safety in the after life.

A healthy ego does not display dependency-based “we-ness.” A healthy ego expresses itself without fear. A healthy ego has a positive and optimistic outlook and takes care of its own needs without compromising the needs of others. A healthy ego is independent, and free to choose how to live its own life because it has either been released from the ties of fear-based conditioning, or it was brought up in a loving family environment that did not express fear.

Developing a healthy ego is a pre-requisite for living in soul consciousness. Individuals have to become viable independent entities before they can effectively bond with others to form a group. We become viable and independent when we free ourselves from our subconscious fears. The process of learning to release the fear-based beliefs of the ego, so the ego can align with the needs of the soul, is called by different names – personal transformation, self-actualization, individuation and psychosynthesis. In all cases the process involves the releasing of the fear-based beliefs of the ego, so the ego can become one with (bond with) the soul. The soul knows only the higher vibrational energies of love, which are incompatible with the lower vibrational energies of fear. The ego must therefore release its fears before it can blend with the soul.

Personal transformation occurs when we a) become aware of our subconscious and conscious fear-based beliefs by naming them, b) understand the origin of our subconscious and conscious fear-based beliefs, c) learn to release our subconscious and conscious fear-based beliefs so we can break out of our personal, cultural and environmental conditioning, and d) learn to become a viable independent human being by understanding how to take care of our own needs without compromising the needs of others, and by learning to express ourselves through open and effective communication so that we can be honest and truthful about how we feel.

When individuals operate from soul consciousness, they *voluntarily* choose to associate with others that share the same values and interests to form a “we-ness” that is not based on dependency, but based on friendship and trust. Self-actualized individuals will only modify their personal needs to align with the needs of others, as long as they are able to fully express themselves and there is no feeling of dependency or duress associated with belonging to the group.

Cultural Transformation

Just as an individual’s personality is a reflection of their inner beliefs, the culture of a group is a reflection of the subconscious and conscious beliefs held by the group. The beliefs a group holds represent the

heritage of the group's cultural past, modified by the beliefs of the current decision-making authority or ruling elite.

Like individuals, group entities have two poles of consciousness – the group ego and the group soul. When the group operates from ego consciousness, the individual members of the decision-making authority of the group – usually some form of elite – put the satisfaction of their own needs before the needs of other members of the decision-making authority and before the needs of the group as a whole. This usually leads to conflicts in the leadership group.

When a group entity operates from soul consciousness, the individual members of the decision-making authority of the group develop a sense of “we-ness” whereby they consider the needs of the group as a whole, and the needs of other leadership group members, while attempting to satisfy their own needs. They willingly compromise the satisfaction of their own needs for the needs of the leadership group and the needs of the group as a whole. They display a sense of enlightened self-interest. They learn how to bond with each other and with the group.

The process of learning to align the needs of the group ego with the needs of the group soul is called cultural transformation.

Cultural transformation can only begin to occur when the individual members of the decision-making authority stop thinking in terms of their own self-interest, and start thinking in terms of the good of the whole. This process requires the individual members of the decision-making authority to let go of the fear-based beliefs of their ego's and replace them with the love-based beliefs of their souls. In other words, the individual members of the elite group must participate in their own personal transformation before they can bring about the cultural transformation of the group.

Cultural transformation is a three-stage process involving personal transformation, group cohesion, and the structural alignment of the policies, process and systems of the group with the group's beliefs and values.

The First Stage of Cultural Transformation – Personal Transformation

Individual members of the leadership group or decision-making elite work on their own *personal transformation* by replacing their personal fear-based beliefs with positive beliefs that align with the values of their souls (building a healthy ego). This results in a change of personal behaviors that align more closely with the common values that are held

by all souls. This work is not group specific. It focuses on the whole personality of the individual, in all areas of their life.

The Second Stage of Cultural Transformation – Group Cohesion

There are two aspects to group cohesion – values alignment and mission alignment.

Values alignment requires the individual members of the decision-making elite to work on their own personal transformation within the context of the leadership group. They learn how to replace their negative, emotionally unhealthy, fear-based beliefs and behaviors that impact their interpersonal relations with other group members, with positive, emotionally healthy, love-based beliefs and behaviors. They begin by agreeing on a set of values and behaviors that they aspire to as a group that will govern their inter-personal dynamics and inform their collective decision-making. In the spirit of open communication, they must give each other feedback on how well they are doing at regular intervals. They must become mutually accountable for their own personal transformation.

Mission alignment requires the individual members of the decision-making elite to develop the capacity for collective action. They do this by developing a shared vision of the group's future that sets the overall direction for the development and growth of the group, and a shared mission that defines the goals for their collective action, that also supports their vision. At the same time, they determine their own individual personal missions in life – what is important to them and the legacy they want to leave. The capacity for collective action will be highest when the individual members of leadership group are able to align their personal sense of mission and vision, with the group's sense of mission and vision.

The Third Stage of Cultural Transformation – Structural Alignment

The decision-making elite works on the *structural alignment* of the policies, systems and processes that define how the group operates, with group's shared beliefs and values, and group's vision and mission. If the policies and procedures do not reflect the core beliefs and values of the group, they will inhibit cultural transformation. There will be a misalignment between what the group says, and what the group does.

It is impossible to create a high capacity for collective action if

- a) the decision-making ability of the leadership group is compromised by the fear-based beliefs of the individual members of the leadership group,
- b) the leadership group has no agreed values and behaviors to guide their decision-making and interpersonal dynamics,
- c) the leadership group as a whole has no collective vision of the future, and no set of goals that define their group mission, and
- d) the process and procedures that keep the group functioning are out of alignment with the groups values and beliefs.

In other words, group cohesion depends on leadership cohesion, and leadership cohesion depends on the personal cohesion of each member of the leadership group. Personal cohesion depends on each group member knowing who they are, why they are here, and what it is that brings fulfillment to their lives. The cohesion of the whole depends on the structural alignment of the group's beliefs and values with the policies, procedures and processes that govern the functioning of the group.

The Cultural Transformation of the Group as a Whole

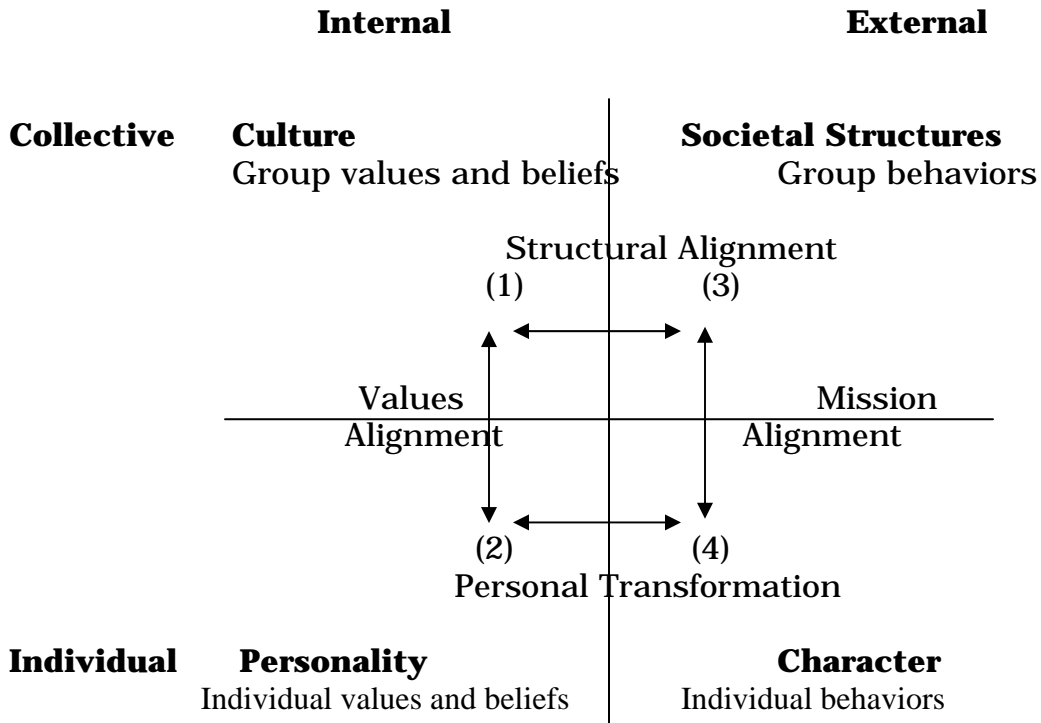
The first three stages of cultural transformation are then repeated with rank and file members of the group. The rank and file members of the group work on a) replacing their general fear-based beliefs with positive beliefs (*personal transformation*); b) replacing the specific fear-based beliefs and behaviors that inhibit their interactions at the sub-group with positive beliefs and behaviors by making personal transformation mutually accountable (*values alignment*); and c) understanding how their personal visions and missions align with the group's vision and mission so they can develop a capacity for collective action (*mission alignment*). They need to understand how their personal contribution and their subgroup's contribution fits into the larger picture so they know how they make a difference to the whole.

- It is vital that the members of the leadership group are seen by the rank and file members to be living the values.
- It is vital that the vision, mission and values developed by the leadership group also resonate with the rank and file members of the group.
- It is vital that the rank and file members feel that their voices are being heard and their needs are being met.

If we refer back to Wilber's Four Quadrants, cultural transformation is the result of a process that involves the alignment of the internal individual quadrant with the external individual quadrant - *personal transformation (the bonding and alignment of the ego with the soul)*; the alignment of the internal individual quadrant with the internal collective quadrant - *values alignment*; the alignment of the personal actions of group members and the collective actions of the group - *mission alignment*; and the alignment of the internal collective quadrant with the external collective quadrant - *structural alignment*. The result of the above is cultural evolution - the shifting of all four quadrants to reflect a new level of consciousness. Cultural evolution will not take place if there is no integrity between the evolution of the four quadrants. In particular, there must be alignment between:

- The deeply held personal values of group members and their personal behaviors (Personal Transformation). Link (2) - (4)
- The deeply held personal values of group members and the collective values of the group. (Values Alignment). Link (2) - (1)
- The personal behaviors of group members and the collective behaviors of the group (Mission Alignment). Link (3) - (4)
- The systems, processes and structures of the group and the collective values of the group (Structural Alignment). Link (3) - (1)

The four alignments that are necessary for cultural transformation are shown in the following Figure.



The two factors that undermine cultural transformation more than all others are, a) the inability of the leadership group or decision-making elite to align their personal behaviors with the values of the group (values alignment), and b) the inability of the leadership group to galvanize the energies of the whole group behind a shared vision and mission (mission alignment).

Measuring Progress

Progress towards cultural transformation needs to be measured at the personal level and the group level. The key indicators at both levels are values alignment and mission alignment. The questions we need to ask and the measurements we need to take are as follows:

- Are individuals, particularly those who make up the leadership group, displaying the behaviors that align with the group’s values – are they walking the talk?

- Do all individuals in the group feel they are able to make a difference to the well-being of the group as a whole or to their subunit - are they finding personal fulfillment?
- Is the group as a whole and the various subunits that make up the group displaying the behaviors that align with the group's values?
- Is the group as a whole and the various subunits that make up the group able to make progress to achieving the group's vision and mission?

Additionally, we need to ask:

- Are the current policies, processes and procedures or rule, laws and regulations promoting or inhibiting the implementation of the group's vision and mission?

The remedies for a lack of values alignment and/or mission alignment are personal transformation and structural alignment.
