



The People's Democratic Party
Manifesto 2008

Well Being for Everyone

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■ SANGAY NGEDUP'S MESSAGE

Bhutan stands at a watershed. The Fourth Druk Gyalpo has placed the responsibility of governance in the hands of the people. In 2008, we will have for the first time in history a democratically elected government to take the nation forward.

His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo stated in his last royal *kasho*: *"As I hand over my responsibilities to my son, I repose my full faith and belief in the people of Bhutan to look after the future of our nation, for it is the Bhutanese people who are the true custodians of our tradition and culture and the ultimate guardians of the security, sovereignty and continued well being of our country."*

His Majesty the Fifth Druk Gyalpo also stated on the centennial National Day: *"Today, in the womb of a strong and peaceful monarchy, we have begun to nurture the hopes of a vibrant democracy. It is this endeavour that we must henceforth uphold as our greatest priority - the success of democracy. For in the success of democracy lies the consolidation of our nation's achievements and the future happiness and well being of Bhutan."*

The people from all corners of Bhutan told my colleagues and me, "We the Bhutanese must not fail to live up to Their Majesties' unconditional trust, and such noble expectations of us".

It is in this united will of the people, where the security of Bhutan rests. Ours is a nation of diverse people in ethnicity, culture, language, religion and outlook. Nevertheless, we consider ourselves first and foremost Bhutanese. Even more, therefore, I treasure this unity in diversity as the wealth of our nation.

The People's Democratic Party represents that very will of the people. We will not fail.

Our foremost objective is to spare no effort in safeguarding our nation's sovereignty, peace and security for all time to come.

Throughout history, our nation has been blessed by enlightened leadership in the form of Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyel and more recently our beloved Monarchs especially His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, who have selflessly dedicated their lives to ensuring that the people of Bhutan live in a sovereign country where peace and prosperity abound.

The people of Bhutan will recall the events in past decades where our nation's security was threatened. We will never forget that it was His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo who rose to the occasion and through his visionary and courageous leadership defended our nation.

The people of Bhutan are reassured by the fact that the security of our nation now lies in the hands of His Majesty the Fifth Druk Gyalpo as the Supreme Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces and Militia. The People's Democratic Party pays tribute to all the brave men and women of the Royal Bhutan Army, Royal Body Guards, and the Royal Bhutan Police for their invaluable service to the kingdom. We solemnly pledge to provide our total support to further strengthen our nation's security capabilities.

We the people of Bhutan have been blessed with Monarchs who have put the nation's interest above all. We the people of Bhutan are truly grateful, and it is from the glorious past and the legacy of our Monarchs that we in the People's Democratic Party draw our inspiration to safeguard the sovereignty of our nation, to put nation before self, and to serve the people of Bhutan with total loyalty and dedication.

Our social and economic vision for Bhutan is to enable every Bhutanese citizen a secure life of well being - Gross National Happiness as the everyday reality for all Bhutanese.

GNH is His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo's legacy. It is a profound philosophy that takes into account the intangible components of spirituality, culture, the natural environment, and good governance along with material development when determining policy. We are extremely proud of our development policy and will always be inspired and guided by this precious philosophy.

As the first step in that direction, our Manifesto 2008 rests on what we learned is the foremost on the people's mind: Rapid growth is not welcome, if it means rising inequalities among us; strengthen the nation's economy so that every Bhutanese can pursue a life of well being.

We heard the message loud and clear. Strong economy is not the end objective, but a powerful means for our well being. This thought, indeed, is at the core of GNH. But the people are warning us that the economic strength can also go against our well being, if left unguided by disciplined policies that take GNH to heart. And, the people told us in no uncertain terms that it is the duty of government to provide opportunity and security for all, in our fast changing economy and society.

Our 2008 Manifesto presents our strategy, priorities and policy considerations that revolve around the people's agenda we harvested. We have ambitious plans to take the country forward on many fronts.

But, we want to be a government that makes only those promises it can keep, and keeps all promises it makes. Honestly, we do not want to raise false expectations of huge benefits that may or may not happen. Rather, we want to begin by delivering real practical benefits that the people can feel, touch and experience, in their everyday life.

We commit to render to the people of Bhutan a leadership of selfless service, with humility, integrity, and compassion - values that were rekindled in me, and in my party colleagues, by all the hard-working people we met throughout the nation. This is the reason why our party's motto speaks of *Service with Humility* and our intent to *Walk the Talk*.

So, as I prepare for the nation's first election as the leader of the People's Democratic Party, my call to the people is a passionate one. Let us unite as one people, and secure a peaceful and proud nation. Let us work together to build a democracy that really works - a democracy that makes our children and grandchildren proud of us. Let us make GNH real as the hard governing discipline, making the life of well being a reality not just for some fortunate few but for all of us. Let us make our cherished values of humility, integrity, and compassion the very governing ideal of our motherland, not just for a few years but for all time to come.

Sangay Ngedup
President

■ OUR VISION OF BHUTAN

The People's Democratic Party has a vision of Bhutan. It mirrors what the people envision, collectively, as their dream:

A sovereign, secure and peaceful kingdom whose people are harmoniously united and enjoy well being, thanks to economic prosperity, wealth of cultural and spiritual heritage, blessings of nature, social justice, and vibrant democracy.

The Party embodies every citizen's aspiration to contribute to this vision, actively and meaningfully, serving the common good and our national interests as we pursue our individual happiness.

■ OUR MISSION

Profoundly inspired by our beloved monarchs, and motivated to serve the people of Bhutan with passion and professionalism, we pledge our mission as follows:

- Safeguard the sovereignty, peace, security and unity of Bhutan;
- Transform the ideals of Gross National Happiness into every day reality for every Bhutanese;
- Work for political, social, cultural and sustainable economic advancement of all Bhutanese;
- Adhere to the ideals and principles of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan, in spirit and in action;
- Build a flourishing, effective and functional democracy;
- Establish exemplary governance, whether in the Government or in the Opposition; and
- Serve with humility, integrity, and compassion to fulfill our stated policy priorities.

THE HEART OF THE MATTER: An Economic Agenda for Well Being

At the heart of this Manifesto lies an economic agenda: an urgent need to strengthen the economy of our nation - to raise people's living standards without leaving any person or parts of the nation behind. The agenda, in other words, is economic progress that enables every Bhutanese to pursue happiness, and enjoy well being.

We believe that a strong and vibrant economy is not the end in and of itself, but a critical means for our well being. Economic gains to date have been enormous, unprecedented in the history of our nation and of the developing world. Such changes have brought about lessons for the future, which we harvested by listening to the wisdom of the people throughout Bhutan.

In various ways, in their language and from their context, the message we heard is constant and singular: Rapid growth is not welcome, if it means rising inequalities among us; strengthen the nation's economy so that every Bhutanese can pursue a life of well being; and it is the duty of government to provide opportunity and security for all, in our rapidly changing economy and society.

The issue is not how fast our economy grows, but *how* it grows fast. It is about how the private sector can drive the growth, and how the government should support that growth. It is about how high are the quality of goods and services we produce in an increasingly competitive world. It is about how they are produced, to keep harmony with our cultural heritage and natural environment. And, it is about how we share the fruits of growth among us as a people. We are convinced: unless we make a concerted and strategic effort in all seriousness now, it will become tougher to build a GNH nation that satisfies the people's aspirations.

Two of the most pressing challenges facing our nation today are poverty and youth unemployment. They are symptomatic of a weak economy, and can only be overcome through broad based economic growth.

"Rapid growth is not welcome, if it means rising inequalities among us; strengthen the nation's economy so that every Bhutanese can pursue a life of well being... The issue is not how fast our economy grows, but how it grows fast."

BROAD BASED ECONOMIC GROWTH

The PDP will pursue a strategy of broad based economic growth that:

- ✚ alleviates poverty, reduces the gap between haves and have-nots, and results in higher standards of living for everyone;
- ✚ generates gainful employment *opportunity* for all;
- ✚ balances development of rural and urban economies;
- ✚ balances development across all parts of our country;
- ✚ is guided by good governance, foresighted policies and proactive public investments;
- ✚ cherishes our cultural and natural heritage, and benefits from them in turn;
- ✚ is led by the private sector's efficiency and innovation;
- ✚ is driven by the pursuit of excellence in what the economy produces, for markets abroad and at home; and
- ✚ breaks down barriers that bar socially, physically and economically handicapped people from a productive life of well being.

In all this, we will utilize the enormous human and infrastructure investments already made, to their fullest potential. This means attention to strategic maintenance of these investments, be they maintaining school buildings and roads, or giving government and private sector employees opportunities to keep up and keep updating their knowledge and skills. And this means learning to appreciate such "maintenance" work as a core value in our culture and our work ethics.

We will seek to broaden and diversify our economic base, equip our people for new opportunities, and help vulnerable people to help themselves leap out of the crevice of poverty, disabilities, or discrimination.

We will stimulate productivity and quality of what we produce in those areas where most Bhutanese work today. We will enable farms, industries, and service sectors to create new business and employment opportunities faster. And, we will bring down barriers to entry by Bhutanese citizens to grasp such opportunities.

In so doing, we will view agriculture part of the private sector with great business potential, calling for transportation, ICT, and other logistical infrastructure and services like any other private business. And, we will recognise its distinguishing feature as managing high risks and uncertainties of nature's whim, which among other things demands innovative financial products and services in banking and insurance.

Likewise, we will view industry and service sectors as the domain of the private entrepreneurship, which calls for efficient transportation, ICT, other logistical infrastructure, and services of business-minded government. They will be encouraged to exercise freedom and innovation within good business governance. In particular, those who demonstrate corporate social responsibility, which seeks win-win strategies between “what’s good for business and what’s good for the society”, will be highly encouraged.

We will enable enterprising businesswomen and men - especially the younger generation - to seize business opportunities and take jobs where people are, not the other way around. Small business development and self-employment opportunities will be supported.

We will accelerate hydropower development further, so that our common resource from energy export can finance development, keep citizens’ tax burden low, and attain economic self-sufficiency much faster.

In all this, we will jealously guard the very foundation that makes the above possible: sound macroeconomic framework; vibrant cultural and environmental heritage; people well equipped to grasp opportunities; and last but not at all the least, good governance.

Bhutan has worked hard to build a sound macroeconomic framework, which has become our national hallmark. Prudent macroeconomic policies will be our practice in managing both short-term fluctuations and long-term development strategies. We will monitor national debt to keep net debt at a prudent level, and will borrow only to invest.

Our nation has also worked hard to safeguard our cultural and environmental heritage, which is another hallmark that distinguishes Bhutan from the rest of the world. Ours is a nation of diverse people in culture, language, religion and outlook. Ours is also a nation of the world’s most extensive bio-diversity, of which we are exceedingly proud. We value the diversity of people and nature as the nation’s wealth that strengthens our distinct identity as Bhutanese.

A nation that excels is one with a deeply shared sense of purpose on long-term changes and investments it must make, and have the determination to prepare its citizens for that future. Our nation has worked very hard to give access to education and health services to all. We must now work harder still, and induce paradigm shifts for quality, so that the people are well prepared to take on new opportunities in pursuit of happiness for themselves and their circles of family and community.

Last but not the least, we will endeavour to be the government that deserves the people’s trust. We will serve them with humility, and walk the talk with integrity.

In the above context, what follows highlights our policy priorities. We will propose clear targets for our policy agenda, in close consultation with the civil service after reviewing the Tenth Five Year Plan and the resource envelope available.

We begin with the most immediate concern of every Bhutanese, including everyone at the People's Democratic Party: Good governance under democracy.

GOOD GOVERNANCE: Government People Can Trust

In our walkabouts throughout Bhutan, people of remote regions taught us a precious lesson: Even though they toil in harsh conditions without necessities such as safe water, road, or electricity, they can harbour hopes and dreams of a better future to work for - simply because they trust the government. Without that trust that has been nurtured through 100 years of enlightened monarchy, their psychological well being would suffer enormously. And, they fear that democracy might mean a government they can no longer trust.

We learned that it is ultimately this very **trust between the people and their government**, which enables a sovereign people to be *"the ultimate guardians of the security, sovereignty and continued well being"* of their nation, as stated by His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo.

Herein lies the reason why it is the quality of governance, throughout the entire human history, that has determined the success or failure of nation states. This insight gained from the wisdom of our people ignited a fire of passion in us. We resolved even more to do our best for good governance in democracy. In the very strength of this resolve rest the success of democracy we are to build, and the security of our nation itself.

We will robustly uphold and enforce rule-of-law and equal justice as the fundamental elements of good governance under democracy. And because effective checks and balances are vital for good governance in a democratic system, we look to strengthen the various branches of government and Constitutional Bodies.

Public Policy Interventions:

- Institutional strengthening of constitutional bodies and the various branches of government;
- Ensure accountability, transparency, efficiency and professionalism in governance and all public services;
- Reengineer and reorient public service to make it people friendly and more service centred, not bureaucratic;
- Protect the rights of vulnerable people who are economically, socially or physically handicapped;
- Support decentralization and local government institutions to enable people at the grassroots to effectively participate in matters that directly affect the development of their communities and their own well being;
- Strengthen corporate governance in both private and public corporations; and
- Improve coordination and foster team-spirit between different government ministries and agencies.

Strengthening Rule of Law and Justice:

- Enforce rule of law to ensure a level playing field and infuse in our people confidence in the impartiality of governance;
- Enable equal, fair, and timely justice without discrimination based on financial status, ethnicity, gender or religion;
- Respect fully the independence of the judiciary;
- Support capacity building of our Judicial system to enable efficient dispensation of justice and keep up with new and growing demands;

We will strive to be the government that earns and deserves the people's trust. It is a journey that begins by walking the talk with integrity - making only those promises we know we can deliver, and delivering all promises we make.

And, it is a journey we want to take in the company of public servants who are true to their sacred duty - to serve the people with humility. We want to work with those who honour the extraordinarily high cost of time the Bhutanese people incur, away from farms, homes, offices or businesses, to access government services. We want to work with those who willingly answer the call of duty, providing government service quickly and thoughtfully, however insignificant or routine the service might seem. We want to work with those public servants, who never think of themselves "high", having some power over the people they are employed to serve - the very people whose resources fund their salary. In other words, we will encourage our values of humility, integrity and compassion to permeate throughout all public institutions, and improve the delivery of public services.

In turn, we will offer these institutions our strong support to unleash their true potential for excellence. We will assist their leaders to create employment conditions that befit the best talent the nation has to offer. We will help build a work environment that is open to out-of-the-box thinking, innovation, cutting edge knowledge, and the world's best practice.

In particular, we will value support staff and younger and junior officers in all public institutions, in rural areas as well as in towns. They are the wheels that keep any organization running smoothly, and the front-line that brings the government in direct contact with the people. Without their enthusiastic partnership, no public agencies can hope to deliver their commitments fast, well, and thoughtfully.

In particular, too, we will value teamwork that makes the whole greater than the sum of its parts, cutting across artificial boundaries of ministries, agencies, ranks and grades. People's well being is holistic by nature. It does not come in convenient compartments. Public service for the people's well being demands holistic service of one united government, in everything it does. So, we will begin by walking our talk. Our leadership group will work as a strong team, whether as the Cabinet of the Government or as the Shadow Cabinet of the Opposition.

IMPROVING PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY:

- Synchronize existing Acts, Rules and Regulations to eliminate conflicts and contradictions, for efficient, friendly and effective public service;
- Review and streamline all public service procedures;
- Strengthen anti-corruption measures through systemic corrections, transparent and equitable public service delivery systems and capacity building of the ACC, etc.;
- Develop human resources of the public sector to enhance capacity and professionalism;
- Adopt strategies to motivate and retain high calibre public servants with right values and people-centred service perspective;
- Review and revise, if found necessary, the salary and benefits of public employees congruent to inflation and to what relevant labour markets bear;
- Encourage public servants to take initiative, reward performers, and advance meritocracy in the civil service and corporate sector;
- Fully exploit the potential of integrated ICT in service delivery through ICT service portals such as *e-Zhungchong* and *e-Zhabtog*;
- Institute effective mechanism to address grievances at all levels;

e-Zhabtog Public Service that Delivers Service

The opening line of our Constitution reads, "Bhutan is a Sovereign Kingdom and the Sovereign power belongs to the people of Bhutan."

This powerful declaration is the bedrock of People's Democratic Party's commitment to "Service with Humility". Our nation's supreme power is in the hands of the people - they are the masters, and the singular purpose of government is to serve them.

Are people being served well? Our villagers spend far too much time chasing permits to harvest rural timber or even to build their own house. Claiming life or house insurance benefits is too confusing and time-consuming, offering no solace to those in distress. And, it can take years to change a person's *thram*.

If it is cumbersome and takes too long to receive, it is not a service at all. What we need, badly, is a totally fresh approach to kick-start the change.

e-Zhabtog represents that approach. The powerful use of ICT can provide prompt, convenient and effective public service. All public services, from car registrations to school admissions, can be accessible from any computer terminal, anywhere. For customers unwilling or unable to go online, one-window service centres can serve them in every gewog and thromde - and, with staff to assist those people who are physically handicapped or cannot read or write.

The potential of e-Zhabtog is unlimited. Consider the possibilities: paying utility bills; booking bus tickets; monitoring the weather or potato prices; paying taxes; depositing or withdrawing money; renewing vehicle registration or trade licenses; applying for passports, audit clearances; birth certificates; and even studying online.

Other nations are already there. (Visit www.esevaonline.com and www.ecitizen.gov.sg for success stories in India and Singapore.) We must too - our well being is at stake.

And because good governance must be rooted in people's empowerment and participation, we want to see decentralization become a permanent feature of Bhutan's landscape. It must, however, be good decentralization, where accountabilities are clear, taken seriously, and "trust and verify" monitoring works.

Local Government: Participatory Development

- Empower local governments through decentralization and real devolution of authority;
- Strengthen local governments and enhance their capacity to effectively carry out their responsibilities;
- Establish effective monitoring system to ensure that people are well served; and
- Train local leaders to efficiently discharge their functions in light of their expanded roles and government reforms.

Last but not least, good governance needs the wholesome discipline by the media and the civil society, operating in a policy environment that honors their freedom. We look to the free and independent media and civil society organizations, of good ethics and high professional integrity, to maintain the hard discipline.

A Dynamic Civil Society:

- Create an enabling environment for the development of free and vibrant media and civil society;
- Respect the right to information as enshrined in our Constitution to foster transparency and accountability in government.
- Encourage self-regulation based on the highest ethical standards minimizing the need for government oversight;
- Work closely with civil society organizations to provide services to hard-to-reach vulnerable groups;
- Support human resource development of civil society organizations.

People's Democratic Party
Ministerial Code of Conduct
Walking the Talk

Ministers bear crucial responsibility and duty to the nation - both in the discharge of their official functions and in their personal conduct.

The People's Democratic Party is drawing up a Code of Conduct for its ministers, which holds them to the highest standards of propriety. The Code of Conduct will be requiring our ministers to be the very vision of good citizen-leaders themselves. They will:

1. Comply with all laws, rules and regulations of the land;
2. Provide truthful information to Parliament and the public at large;
3. Be accountable for all policies, decisions and actions of their Ministries and, if needed, submit themselves to appropriate scrutiny;
4. Avoid using official facilities and resources for political purposes;
5. Abide by the counsel of the Chief Finance Officer of their Ministries on any action they propose that may breach the requirements of propriety, regularity and economy;
6. Uphold the principle of political impartiality of the civil service and on no account ask civil servants to act in any way that would compromise their apolitical status;
7. Refrain from abusing powers to influence civil servants or public appointees, or to award contracts for personal or partisan gain, with all decisions taken strictly on merit;
8. Make efficient and cost-effective travel arrangements, and keep delegations as small as possible. All ministers to make public annual lists of all foreign travel undertaken and total costs incurred by the Royal Government;
9. Declare private interests, and resolve conflicts of interest in a manner that protects the public interest;
10. Never accept gifts or favours that would compromise their judgement or place them under obligation in the discharge of their duties; and
11. Abide by the highest principles of public life including humility, integrity and compassion.

WOMEN AND YOUTH: Our Future, Now

This Manifesto is about what we must do **now** for the future of our nation. That means agenda for the youth as well as women, to which we now turn before anything else.

The character and values of young people today define our nation's future. So do women, for it is widely acknowledged that enlightened and healthy mothers influence the character of future generations far more than those of their fathers. And, like all countries of the world, a lion's share of the Bhutanese population is women and the youth. So, we must make sure that we never become a society that narrows life choices and opportunities for women and the younger generation.

To be sure, Bhutan is regarded internationally as a gender-balanced country where women enjoy equal rights under law and overt gender discrimination are largely absent. Bhutan is also seen abroad as a nation whose people value their children enormously. But, we do not want to compare ourselves to an average world practice, for the issues are simply too important.

We know gender discrimination is present in Bhutan, however covert it may be. We know that some of our young citizens are increasingly unhappy, facing unemployment, substance abuse or teenage pregnancy - barriers that block them from unleashing their true potential. And, those despicable abuses of power called domestic violence and child abuse are also present in our society.

And, we know that covert bias is much harder to change than overt ones, for it is about people's mindset, habit and behaviour. We know, too, that abuse of power in general, and violence against women and young people in particular, are tough to detect and even tougher to remove.

We - including members of our Party's Women and Youth Support Groups - do not pretend to understand all the reasons why, nor do we have magic solutions for these inequities and social ills. But, we also know there are governments, non-government organizations, and private corporations around the world that have taken on discrimination in workplace, and are winning the fight. Lessons we have harvested from such successful cases are the following:

- Conviction of the top leadership matters, and matters a great deal, in changing mindset and ending discriminatory practices;
- Sustained change begins when those in the position of power wake up to benefits of diversity as "good for business!"
- Numbers matter. Visible presence of discriminated people in leadership groups, such as senior management or in the parliament, starting as low as around 10~20% begins to accelerate cultural change;
- Solutions that give special treatments, such as quota, tend not to work. Because they amount to reverse discrimination, they demean merit-based achievements of discriminated people, invite backlash, and reduce the likelihood of lasting change.
- What works in raising the representation of minority groups is to recruit qualified candidates actively leaving no stones unturned, and to make final selections strictly on merit. Those who are qualified in spite of discrimination tend to be the best anyway. Such practices quickly build employers' credibility and pave way for career advancement of the minority group employed.
- **What works, also, is to keep asking "what about women, what about the youth?" in everything one does in one's business at all times.** This is the so-called "mainstreaming", but it works only when the attention comes with the force of conviction from the leadership.

The People's Democratic Party already has the leadership who needs no convincing. The substance of our Manifesto is the result of asking "what about women, what about the youth?" in all its aspect. As such, we will not have a long list of policy agenda "segregated" from the rest. We invite, instead, interested readers to keep asking the same questions as we did, in reading through the Manifesto.

Policy considerations presented below contain those that do not neatly belong elsewhere, or merit a separate mention because of their importance:

Women:

- Harmonize laws and policies and enact legislation that further strengthen women's rights, well being and welfare;
- Strengthen and support the work of National Commission for Women and Children;
- Implement the National Plan of Action for Gender;
- Mainstream women and children's issues in all development plans;
- Together with civil society organizations, work to reduce violence against women and children, focusing particularly on far more effective implementation of laws and meaningful assistance for victims;
- Raise political participation of women, and ensure good representation in decision-making positions of the Party and the government;
- Empower women and children to participate meaningfully in matters concerning them; and
- Support the participation and representation of women throughout the public sector including local governments, the Civil Service, other public agencies and corporations.

Youth:

- Develop and implement a comprehensive Youth Policy;
- Work in partnership with the private sector and civil society organizations on positive initiatives to empower the youth and prevent their marginalization;
- Work in partnership with the private sector and support civil society organizations to create opportunities for the youth, particularly school dropouts, to acquire skills and experience required for gainful employment;
- In conjunction with civil society organizations support Youth Centres to provide social, recreational and counselling services;
- Together with sports organizations, promote the youth's participation in sports throughout the country, in and outside school curriculum, with the view to cultivating their leadership skills and team spirit;
- Activate the Employment Trust Fund to help youth obtain gainful employment;
- Facilitate access of educated youth to international employment, training, internship programmes, through innovative bilateral arrangements; and
- Raise political participation of the youth, and ensure good representation in decision-making positions of the Party.

Youth Unemployment Already a reality!

My name is Kemey Dorji. I am from Phobjikha. I am 26 years old and unemployed.

I scored 50% in my Class XII exams, which did not qualify me for higher studies in Bhutan. I borrowed money from my friend's father and went to study in Darjeeling. I was sure that I would get a handsome job and be able to support my family after I got a degree.

I studied hard, and when I graduated in June 2006, I expected to get a good job to pay off my loan and look after my family.

I applied for more than a dozen jobs in the government and private sector, but was successful in none. In fact I wasn't even short-listed for most of the interviews. I think it's because of my poor family background - I have no one to talk for me and push me forward. Or perhaps my degree certificate is useless.

Today I'm barely surviving by doing temporary jobs. I'm still looking for a job. And I have a loan to repay.

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Government sources estimate that more than 90,000 jobs need to be created in the next five years. And in Vision 2020, the Government estimated that 267,000 jobs will have to be created by 2020.

Unemployment is real. Unless we act now, many more youth can expect to join the ranks of Kemey Dorji. We cannot let that happen.

EDUCATION: Investing for the Future

Education is the most powerful equalizer of people's endowments, with which they expand the horizon of life choices, grasp economic opportunities, gain higher living standards, pursue happiness, and enjoy a life of well being.

Free education that equips people well for such a life is our constitutional right and indispensable for our vision of Bhutan to come true. And, it is the base on which Bhutan will evolve as a competitive economy in the world where knowledge-based enterprise and entrepreneurs thrive.

Building on enormous educational accomplishments to date, the key for today's Bhutan lies in leveraging high-quality education for all. And, that aim calls for a paradigm shift in how we think about education, and about how we organize the education sector

Quality wholesome education is one that prepares students for a life of constant learning. It inculcates in our children core human values such as humility, integrity and compassion - values we cherish as a society. It nurtures leadership talent among them, and endows young people with skills that open doors to opportunities for gainful employment.

To provide such a wholesome education means an education system that is not only in tune with changing skills demanded in life after schooling, but can also sense and anticipate future needs, at all times. In any country's education system, educators and policy-makers alone cannot achieve such a feat. It calls for a real, dynamic and proactive partnership with parents and business leaders of wisdom and substance.

Teachers

To provide a wholesome education means putting teachers at the centre of the education process. Ultimately, good education at any levels happens with outstanding teachers, whose knowledge, leadership quality, and human values serve as role models that shape the future of our nation. And, it happens through the quality of time spent, in learning interactions between teachers and students. As such, teaching is a noble profession. Our society must find every possible way to value teachers, just as we do in all of our diverse spiritual traditions.

HEALTH: Quality Care for All

Good health is, perhaps, the most immediate on people's mind when they think about their well being. Clearly, success in achieving a healthier society will have a positive impact on all other spheres of our development endeavour.

Like our education agenda, our aim demands a paradigm shift in how we think about health services, and about how we organize and manage the health sector.

We want to see Bhutanese people who are not just living longer, but leading healthier lives. The emphasis to date on increasing survival rates must shift to improving both the longevity and quality of life, taking into consideration the number of years spent in good health.

We want to improve further the quality of health care provided by strengthening the health delivery system. We want to create innovative means to deliver health services and institute incentives and opportunities for both motivating and strengthening the health care providers.

Our constitution gives every Bhutanese the right to free basic health care. The PDP is fully committed to ensuring that universal access to basic health services is available to all Bhutanese, particularly for those living in remote areas and those in the margins of society. In addition, we will ensure that the quality of our basic health care is the best in the region.

The PDP firmly believes in providing health care with a humane face and we will work towards improving both the quality of health care and the services that go with it. We also recognize the importance of providing alternative choices such as private health care especially in the large urban areas for people who can afford it and for the convenience of the modern busy citizen.

OUR ECONOMY: Growth that Works for Everyone's Well Being

We will adhere to the GNH principle wherein economic growth itself is not an end but an important means to achieve people's well being. We will accordingly pursue a strategy of broad-based economic growth.

Such broad-based growth must alleviate **poverty** - a debilitating reality for one in every five Bhutanese, most of whom live in our villages. GNH will remain an elusive dream if our people are not secure from a life of poverty.

Growth must **generate employment opportunity for all**, which is how one thinks about full employment at the frontier of economic theory and practice today. Public policies must assist our people to equip themselves, to grasp growing and changing job opportunities. It goes without saying that public policies must not allow job market barriers to entry by Bhutanese citizens, including women and the youth with little work experience. It also goes without saying that public policies must disallow barriers that bar socially, physically and economically handicapped people from leading a productive life.

We will ensure that growth results in **higher and equitable standards of living** for the population. Economic growth that worsens income distribution is self-defeating for the health of the economy, as well as harmony of society and politics.

In particular, the government must work to provide a social safety net for vulnerable citizens, trapped in the shackles of poverty or prolonged unemployment, so that nobody goes hungry. We must also provide special support for disabled persons to enable them live a productive life and to enjoy well being.

Public policies, investment and services must also coalesce around **small and self-employed business development**, which can inject vitality to both the rural and urban economy. We must take on a new perspective on this oft-ignored business segment: They are the incubator of big business, sources of growth for today and even more for the future, and - most critically - the very agents of change who incur high personal risks in taking jobs to where people are, and not the other way around.

To be sure, **rapid economic growth** is highly desirable. But the strategic focus of policies must be on the character of economic growth and its outcomes:

- WHO should be the leading engine of growth - private sector or government;
- WHAT the quality and diversity of goods and services produced should be, to survive in an increasingly competitive world economy;
- HOW goods and services should be produced, regarding the balance with the nation's heritage including its natural environment; and
- WHERE, across regions and population, the distribution of employment opportunities, income and wealth should be going.

In the above context, what follows highlights key strategic views we hold, to guide policy choices for balanced growth.

CULTURAL HERITAGE: Valuing Culture for Our Well Being

Ours is a nation of diverse people in culture, including language, ethnic background, religion and outlook, and is a nation vibrant because of it. We value this diversity of people as our nation's wealth that unifies our distinct identity as Bhutanese.

Our diverse and rich cultural heritage, including traditional values and institutions, is deeply ingrained in the Bhutanese way of life and is inseparable from our well being. It defines who and what we are. And it is the very backbone of the security of Nation Bhutan.

Ours is a vibrant and evolving culture that must be encouraged to develop further. It must be safeguarded at the same time, from erosion in a rapidly globalizing world. And, a rapidly growing economy must work so much more consciously to cherish and safeguard the heritage of the people. As both cultural heritage and the economy develop over time, striking a wholesome balance that benefits both must be the strategic choice of the government as well as of the private sector.

Our Cultural Agenda:

- Enhance the central role of cultural heritage, including traditional values, institutions, languages, music, arts and religion to enrich our well being and promote nation building;
- Preserve, protect and promote the cultural heritage of our country including *dzongs*, *lhakhangs*, *goendeys*, *ten-sum* and *nyes*;
- Promote and support *rabdeys*, *gomdeys*, *shedras*, *rineys*, *drubda*, *patshalas* and *anim dratshangs* in our country;
- Support existing cultural centres and institutes including *zorig chusum*, museums and libraries and help establish relevant new ones particularly outside Thimphu;
- Promote our traditional arts and crafts at fairs and exhibitions, both at home and abroad and support cultural exchange programmes with other countries;
- Develop national expertise on heritage conservation, and support restoration of nationally significant cultural heritage sites;
- Support the Bhutan Cultural Trust Fund, civil society organisations engaged in heritage preservation and advancement, and private sector business that takes on harmony with heritage in their business strategy;
- Promote community-based cultural tourism and cultural industries, as well as festivals and heritage sites that encourage communities to celebrate their heritage;
- Document, publish and promote research on indigenous knowledge and cultural and folklore heritage, particularly our oral tradition that may be in danger of dying out;
- Enhance access to cultural concepts and values for the younger generation through education and media
- Promote new construction to reflect traditional architectural design more meaningfully and substantively, without stifling creativity and vitality in design

NATURAL HERITAGE: The Middle Path

Ours is a nation with some of the world's most extensive bio-diversity, of which we are exceedingly proud. The importance we place on our natural heritage is reflected in our constitution which requires every Bhutanese - as a "fundamental duty" - to protect our natural resources and environment for the benefit of present and future generations.

Our success in conserving our environment can be squarely attributed to the enlightened leadership of our farsighted Kings. And we have been rewarded by international appreciation for our success. But it is us, the Bhutanese people, who have benefited most from our natural heritage - whether it is through the clean air we breathe, or the tourists who are attracted to Bhutan for its unspoiled natural beauty.

Our resolve to protect our environment will, however, be tested like never before in coming years. Our prized natural heritage will face increasing pressure from economic growth with increasing industrialization, urbanization and changing lifestyles, from climate change, and from the continued high dependence on natural resources for livelihoods.

In the face of these challenges, the PDP will uphold our extraordinary commitment to the conservation of our natural resources, while maintaining a healthy balance between economic development and environmental conservation - "the middle path."

Conserving our Natural Heritage:

- Closely monitor the exploitation of natural resources to ensure long-term sustainability;
- Promote sustainable land management - protect your *phazhing*;
- Support local communities in sustainable utilization of natural resources;
- Improve the long-term ability of natural resources to support livelihood and reduce poverty by piloting interventions - bio-prospecting and commercialization of forestry products such as high value herbs, plants and niche products, community forestry for sustainable harvest of biomass, private forestry, and development of conservation areas for tourism;
- Support the establishment of the Ugyen Wangchuck Forest and Environment Institute in Bumthang, and elevate the Institute and the NRTI into centres of excellence in the field of conservation and natural resources.
- Work together with educational institutions, civil society organizations, and affected private sector such as tourism to raise citizens' awareness and sustained actions on environmental issues, including household waste management and litter;
- Safeguard the environment as transportation and other infrastructure expand including through encouraging the use of mass transport;
- Explore innovative measures and introduction of cutting-edge practice to reduce crop loss through wildlife depredation, and provide suitable compensation; and
- Establish effective solid waste management focusing on the three R's program of reduce, reuse and recycle.

VILLAGES AND TOWNS: Liveable Communities for Our Well Being

Economic growth is always accompanied by greater social and physical mobility, as people pursue better opportunities. Our strategy of broad based economic growth, and the associated agenda sketched out in this Manifesto, have described how we want to strike a good balance in well being between our villages and towns, as people shift their location of work and place of residence.

That balance does not come about naturally as economy grows. Nearly all industrialised countries have seen a period of excessive rural-urban migration, making ghost villages on the one hand and polluted and congested towns on the other, both unfit for human habitation. Such trends have turned urban infrastructure inadequate while wasting rural ones. More importantly, both village and town folks in such countries lost a critical ingredient for their well being - a sense of belonging to a community.

People in many of these countries are now making a U-turn. After generations of urban living, urban dwellers especially young families are going back to rural living. Many leave high profile careers or good-paying jobs behind, and many also choose to engage in farming. And, they do so because the rise in their well being more than compensates for any loss in income, with more time for family, less stress-related illnesses, a strong sense of belonging to a vibrant and caring community, and the sense of security that comes with it.

As Bhutan has always done, we need to learn from such experiences. These rural-urban-rural shifts have occurred over a century and often more. Unknown magnitudes of resources have been wasted along the way, not to speak of inadequate well being of the people concerned. We have the advantage of a latecomer to skip such wasteful trends of centuries, by anticipating the future and acting now.

To do so calls for concerted efforts of national and local governments, and strong collaboration between these governments, private sector and the civil society. It will not be an easy task. But, there will otherwise be an excessive rural-urban migration, putting undue stress on people's well being, natural environment, and on urban infrastructure.

As our agenda have already described, agriculture needs to thrive as dynamic private business, just as businesses do in urban centres. New business and employment opportunities need to go where the people are today, not the other way around. Financial, ICT and other business services need to be proactive, leading new growth centres with foresight, instead of following

FOREIGN POLICY: Securing Our Well Being

For a small nation such as ours, foreign policy is the most powerful tool in ensuring the sovereignty and security of our nation. The wise foreign policies adopted by our Kings have served the nation exceedingly well in the past and we shall continue to follow them dutifully.

We live in an increasingly inter-connected world. Information, people, and financial resources move across national borders quickly and often in great volumes. More Bhutanese travel, study, or work abroad, and vice versa. Events anywhere on earth can have a direct and immediate impact, right here at home.

In such a world, issues that affect Bhutanese interests are entwined with international events more than ever before. We have already experienced this world in terrorism, drugs, the spread of communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS, and climate change. Actions Bhutan takes on such issues will become fully effective when we engage with other nations and with international organizations.

So, security and well being of the Bhutanese people cannot be divorced from those of the rest of humanity. Bhutan must therefore pursue Bhutanese interests consciously, strategically, and proactively, as a member of the international community.

In so doing, we must also harness the strength of our foreign service to promote our exports and economic interests abroad. Military might has given way to the "soft power" of economic strength and skilled diplomacy in international political relations. Leveraging our foreign policy to achieve economic growth and self reliance can effectively strengthen our international standing.

Conclusion

2008 marks a pivotal year for our nation. It reminds us of a similar defining moment in our nation's history when, a hundred years ago, our people unanimously enthroned *Gongsar* Ugyen Wangchuck as the first hereditary Monarch of Bhutan.

A century later, our Monarchs have selflessly bestowed the power of governance to the people. For a hundred years, our nation flourished and the people enjoyed peace and progress like never before.

In our Kings, we the people of Bhutan have been extremely fortunate. In His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, our visionary Fourth Druk Gyalpo, we have been truly blessed.

In the thirty-five years of His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck's glorious reign we have witnessed unprecedented political, economic and social progress. Gross National Happiness is His Majesty's gift to the people of Bhutan and to the world at large. Our beloved monarch also gifted the nation our sacred Constitution and democracy with the conviction that this will perpetuate our peace and prosperity. These are His Majesty's legacy.

By gifting us democracy, our Monarchs have not forsaken us. As the Sovereign of our nation and the symbol of our unity they will be ever-present, reassuring us of their continued guidance and benevolence.

As we speak, our people eagerly await the Coronation of our Fifth Druk Gyalpo, His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck. In just over a year as King, His Majesty has emerged as the "People's King" and won the hearts and minds of our people. The reign of His Majesty the Fifth Druk Gyalpo assures us ever greater peace, progress and happiness, and has already outlined his legacy for our people - "a vibrant democracy" and "a strong economy suited to Bhutan's needs".

There is, therefore, no reason why our nation cannot continue to grow stronger and flourish under democracy if our people uphold the legacy of *Druk Gyal Zhipa* Jigme Singye Wangchuck, and work towards fulfilling the legacy of *Druk Gyal Ngapa* Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck.

The People's Democratic Party pledges its absolute loyalty and allegiance to Their Majesties the Fourth and Fifth Druk Gyalpos. And to the people of Bhutan we pledge to serve you with humility, integrity and dedication.

Tashi Delek!