

Democracy, Adult Franchise, and Public Participation

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ABSTRACT

Bhutan is now a democracy. This new democracy promotes adult franchise. It conducts periodic elections and has elected members in parliament and government. It has political parties contesting elections. Despite these basics of democracy, the country lacks accountability mechanisms, participatory channels, independent and active civil societies, education about democracy, and monitoring system that are central to a functional democracy. Citizen-government continue to remain a concerning factors in institutionalising democracy in Bhutan. Drawing from regional experiences, Bhutan poised to have a bumpy ride on democracy. The issue of human rights and social justice would be a far cry. This paper discusses parameters of democracy and public participation in Bhutan and the future of Bhutanese democracy.

Keywords: Democracy, election, participation, people, political parties, adult franchise, human rights

Introduction

For democracy to sustain and flourish, citizens must understand their community, politics and the processes. Social awareness helps to build a civilised society whereas political awareness cherishes healthy democracy. Civilised citizenry provides good nutrition for a vibrant democracy. A civilised society and healthy democracy have coherence in terms of social harmony, unity and ability to understand others' values and cultures.

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East, West and South

Multicultural Bhutan evolved through migration. The original inhabitants such as Brokpa, Lepcha, and Doyas (or Lhops) still survive but are marginalised and losing their identity. Comprising approximately 15% (CIA Factbook) of the country's population², they primarily live in Samtse and surrounding districts (Tshering, 2020). Their younger generations now attend school and have political exposure but hardly politically active. The three major ethnic groups – Ngalops (generally called Ngalongs), Sarchops, and Lhotshampas³ – dominate the country's social, economic, and political life: pre- or post-democracy.

The politically conscious South has become the ultimate decider of the power balance in the last three elections. South is testing the national leadership of democratic Bhutan. While the South and East were punished for their call for political changes in the past, it's the South that plays a vital role now.

The South has interacted with democratic India more often than others – borne the risk of being misled or trained on why democracy and freedom are necessary. However, the South is unlikely to take national leadership in near future despite its heavy influence to determine who holds power in Thimphu. Palace still holds negative perception and unsolicited suspicion about South. It may matter of time for the South to express not necessarily loyalty but democratic rights and political will to force Thimphu to accept that the region too is capable of leading the nation. The non-Nepali population resettled after 1997 may come as a rescue to this operation. West has traditionally controlled the national politics for centuries but East momentarily came to national limelight when Thimphu decided to escort the region post-1997 demonstrations⁴.

² This is estimation based on multiple sources. The exact numbers are difficult to collect since Bhutan's national census do not enumerate population based on language or ethnic group

³ People living in the southern part of Bhutan are referred to as Lhotshampas in Bhutan's Dzongkha language.

⁴ Jigme Y. Thinley from eastern district of Pemagatshel remained central political figure since power devolution in 1998 until the 2013 elections when he lost and retired from politics.

In all elections held so far, the East has shown its displeasure to Thimphu. Thimphu flickeringly used either South or East to retain power balance. Beginning mid-80s, East-West bond was strong, leading to eviction from South while South and West bond has grown stronger post-democracy marginalising the East. The day East and South agree to claim their combined presence in Thimphu, West will feel the threat. This combination may end up determining the fate of Bhutanese monarchy and the century-old political equation. However, this political collaboration requires risk, gambling, and superior political consciousness.

Conscious Civil Society

Civil society is vital element of a democratic society. Organised civil society is the backbone of a democracy (Greenwood, 2007). Civil society in Bhutan is neither pro-active nor politically conscious. It is unorganised. The civil society organisations (CSO) in Bhutan are primarily controlled by royal family⁵.

As of 31 October 2020, 51 CSOs are registered under Civil Society Organisation Authority (CSOA). Only a few engage in democratic processes and civic education. Established by Siok Sien Pek, wife of former journalist and information secretary Kinley Dorji, Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy (BCMD) is the only CSO demonstrating an active interest in democracy dialogues. Over the years, it targeted young citizens, running seminars, and youth camps to sensitise them of their role and importance of their active participation in democratic process.

Civic education can be formal and non-formal. Bhutan has not steered in both fronts as yet. Institutions like Royal University of Bhutan may invite its affiliates for civic and democracy education in addition to Royal Thimphu College, Sherubtse College, and Norbuling Rigter College which are already running some courses and democracy club. The clubs are ineffective. The university may encourage student newspapers or

⁵ CSOs like RENEW, YDF, Bhutan Foundation, RSPCA, Bhutan Nun Foundation, RSPN, Bhutan Media Foundation, Royal Textile Academy are all operated under the direct supervision of royal family.

elections of student council which would help teenagers gain insight into the basic principles of liberal democracies. Engaging students in practicing and rehearsing democracy will lead to more motivation and willingness on their part to become engaged in politics in future. The process will certainly help produce quality and conscious leadership for a vibrant democracy. Educating young people to become members of society, who actively participate in the shaping the political environment is a crucial step in the context of political socialisation (Buhl, 2003). The structure through which this process takes place determines the future political orientation of the individual and ultimately the nation's political future.

Bhutan Transparency Initiative is specialised in enhancing accountability and transparency of public funding and government coffer. This activism is important to keep an elected government accountable for mismanagement of the public funds – an important aspect of an accountable democracy.

The CSOs lack state funding to strengthen their democracy education drive. Prospects of future leadership of democratic Bhutan under current education initiative will concentrate on urban centres and power tussle among few individuals in Thimphu. Lack of adequate active CSOs in civic and democratic education will negatively impact Bhutan's political discourse in future.

Tobgay⁶ cabinet's open-air consultation with residents in Thimphu once a week initiated in 2013 was a step forward in narrowing citizen-government divide and empower citizens in their say on local or national issues. However, initiative remained limited to the capital city and accessible to limited individuals and was discontinued when DNT took over the reign in 2018.

The election commission made few attempts in the early phase of political transition to engage citizens to understand democracy. They, however, were limited to making people understand voting and election process.

⁶ Tshering Tobgay of PDP was prime minister for the period 2013-18

None of the three governments elected since the political change have demonstrated in building a vibrant democracy by actively engaging citizens. The parliamentarians travel to their constituencies during parliamentary breaks and their engagement is limited. For Bhutan to build a healthy and participatory democracy, the parliamentarians must engage in formal forums in villages and towns of their constituency. Having a permanent office in the constituency⁷ would be one step closer to having regular contact with voters and listening to their views and improve their participation.

Participatory Politics and Adult Franchise

The call for political changes in 1990 was resisted on pretext that calls were not ruler-friendly and that Bhutanese citizens were not ready for democracy (Denyer, 2007). Some other claim, democratisation in Bhutan had begun long ago (Masaki, 2013). The resistance failed to last long and ‘democratic’ government was finally allowed. The palace overwhelmingly took credit for the change (Thinley, 2018). Those who raised their voice for change failed to be loud enough to claim their credit.

Bhutanese ‘democracy’ started with mock run polls (Majumdar, 2007). Four imaginary parties Yellow, Green, Red and Blue were created for 21 April 2007 mock polls. Yellow represented traditional values, red industrial development, blue was fairness and accountability, and green for the environment. The exercise was an attempt to teach people about voting. Bhutan’s long claim of being a democratic government had silently accepted its undemocratic history and admitted the need to teach people the basics of a democracy.

An election commission with leadership having no exposure to democratic exercise and bureaucrats in district offices with no understanding of democratic process were teaching and instructing students to act as leaders of a party standing in a democratic election. The country remains a very strategic position for western democracies

⁷ Having permanent office for MPs in constituency was one of the proposals made by Thinley government but was withdrawn

to use as base to exert pressure on China. Had these favourable circumstances not been with Bhutan, country's path to democracy would have received tremendous criticism from the western world.

Ground reality of the time gives a different thought. TV was a new phenomenon in Bhutan with only a couple of hours on air. Limited people within the metropolitan area had the opportunity to own a TV set at home. The country had handful of newspapers published from Thimphu. It would have been a phenomenal success for these newspapers if ever reached a few regional business hubs such as Gelephu, Samtse, Phuentsholing, or Samdrup Jongkhar. Additionally, the readership was the big issue, even today, for these newspapers – let alone understand what the news intended to mean. The language used in these newspapers was targeted for educated elite in metro areas and hardly meant anything for rural population.

The BBS radio was only source of information available for greater mass. According to National Statistics Bureau 2005, 69% of Bhutanese lived in rural area. And radio's reach to these rural folks had been very recent. Telecommunication was accessible to only 76 of the 201 blocks (gewogs). ISP Druknet had 2,000 plus customers, country had approximately 7,000 computers and around 5,000 people were using internet. Social media had not become an option for many Bhutanese. Under these circumstances, there are enough grounds to cast doubt if the idea published by foreign media that Bhutanese generally don't want democracy was a genuine voice of the Bhutanese population (Denyer, 2008). The reluctance of the Bhutanese citizens to actively participate in elections was a lack of education and access to information rather than their displeasure over king handing over some of his authority to the elected bodies.

The ECB had to conduct NC election in phase due to lack of candidates (Reuters, 2008). Strict vetting rules on nominations was one striking reason for lack of candidacy⁸. Further, politics in Bhutan was until then perceived for few limited families who whirled power and influenced national politics for a long time. Professionals were hesitant to risk their profession in favour of politics and democracy. A total of 41 candidates

⁸ Election Act of Bhutan 2008, Article 176(d) and 177(d)

had contested in 15 districts on the first schedule of National Council elections (Bhutan News Service, 2007).

Majority of these elected representative were new public faces and strangers to politics and democracy. It was the challenge for every individual with no political background and democracy education to steer country's politics in a new direction that will determine the future stability of a new democracy.

Thimphu was conscious to make sure National Assembly elections do not divide society. However, parties were ready to win the election be it at the cost of division. Division was obvious with two parties in the field – Druk Phunsum Tshogpa (DPT) and People's Democratic Party (PDP) - fielding some populist and well-revered individuals. Many senior bureaucrats left their jobs to test their luck in politics. While DPT had political stalwarts like Jigmi Y. Thinley and Khandu Wangchuk, the PDP had candidates with royal connection like Sangay Ngedup – maternal uncle of the current king. Thinley influenced bureaucracy and presented himself as the advocate of Gross National Happiness (GNH). Through his personality as a GNH advocate, Thinley had maintained the closest relations with royal family⁹, more precisely with King Jigme Singye Wangchuk.

The NA election held on 24 March 2008 was a shock for many. The voters created the smallest opposition in a newest 'democracy'¹⁰. It was sort of a voters' dismissal of a party – PDP – that had direct royal relations. Interestingly two seats that PDP won were in Ngalop dominated western Bhutan. Major players to swing vote was the last-minute silent campaign by bureaucrats who went home three days before election day and allegedly instructed voters in favour of DPT. PDP's Sangay Ngedup resigned as party leader and two MPs played an

⁹ This close relation was manifested when his son Palden Thinley married Princess Kesang Choden Wangchuk – half-sister of the current king - <https://www.webcitation.org/67L5zetr8?url=http://www.bhutanmajestictravel.com/news/2008/her-royal-highness-ashi-kezung-choden-wangchuck-married-to-dasho-palden-yoeser-thinley.html>

¹⁰ DPT won 45 seats while PDP won 2 seats

active role for five years. Eighty percent of the registered voters turned up to exercise their adult franchise (Sengupta, 2008).

The electorates of Bhutan have remained polarised and divided ever since. They are heavily manipulated and swayed by minor events and issues. The second NA election gave an astounding victory (ECB, 2013) to the smallest opposition, unexpectedly. The second run was more vigorous and lengthier with more than two parties in the contest.

Post-primary, political exchange remained primary reason for unexpected outcome. The Bhutanese law provides opportunities for individuals to change parties after primaries if their party failed to win in top two. This privilege is restricted once they are elected. A lot of exchanges made post primaries in 2013 – including DNT's president abandoning her party to join PDP. The shift psychologically influenced voters loyal to DNT to support PDP. And this loyalty returned to DNT when PDP¹¹ categorically instructed its supporters to vote for DNT in the third parliamentary elections in 2018.

Today public participation in political discourse is not democratic enough. The country is horizontally divided between two parties and the splinter groups within them. Democracy, public participation, review of the government functionaries and effectiveness, holding the government accountable to what their promises are largely absent, except the use of adult franchise during election. The ECB made efforts to energise younger generation through democracy club in schools and colleges but failed to get continuity. ECB-envisioned youth parliament has become functionless.

A small section engages in barter of votes and singing hymns in favour of one party against the other. These individuals invoke fear and suspicion among the supporters of opposing parties. The need of the time is to host continued debate on whether the parties are abiding by their duties and whether they are fostering the gems of democracy. It must be a continuous process and not on the wee hours of another election.

¹¹ PDP failed to pass the primary round in third parliamentary elections in 2018

Democracy at local level

For citizens, their first access to government is the local government. For a democracy to be strong, vibrant, and accountable, these local governments must have better connections with people and their effectiveness must be continuously reviewed through civic activism. The empowered citizens have the responsibility for critical review of their government's performance rather than wait next election to provide mandate.

Democracy in Bhutan is mandated and controlled by central machinery in palace. The political discourse is designed in such a pattern that competition at the local level is absent completely. The local assemblies in villages, municipalities and districts have been made apolitical with the objectives to ensure political influence does not affect their operations. This has created relationship vacuum between the national and local leaders. Laws give no independence to local governments.

The candidates willing to run for local government offices must have clearance of no political affiliation or have resigned as party members at least a year before the contest¹². Legally, this is strong instrument to avoid political representation at the local government but practically not. Although the tendency for Bhutanese to remain not loyal (Subba, 2018) to any political party may be argued as evidence of loose political influence in the local government.

The RGOB claims the devolution of central government authority as early as 1980. However, the local government emerged as agency of little importance following the 'democratic' transition. The earlier form of local government was a rubber stamp to carry out orders of the local district chief appointed directly by the king.

Stronger local government is a litmus test for a maturing democracy and greater public participation in the democratic process. Greater the decentralisation, greater is the public participation in governance and decision making. For a decent democracy, accountability of the local government matters most – being the closest democratic institution for

¹² Local Government Act

citizens. While economic policies are designed and implemented by the central government, social accountability forms the most important part of the local governance.

Social accountability processes are central to enhancing participation, transparency and accountability in local government. Currently, social accountability and grievance redressal mechanisms are either weak or non-existent in Bhutan. Putting in place such platforms for state-citizen dialogue will be an opportunity to air and address public grievances. At present, communities rarely make complaints with LGs. It is not because they have no complaints but the lack of clear and effective complaints handling mechanisms, including channels for feedback and redressal for the communities to file their grievances. As a direct consequence, most complaints are reported to MPs and ACC, which should otherwise be dealt with by LGs. Failing to amend this system will weaken the local government and this in turn will impact on strengthening democracy in Bhutan.

Local Government Elections

Local government elections were one of the most difficult tasks that ECB had to carry out. From vetting the candidates, educating them on the process and responsibilities and preparing a legal framework was a herculean task. The educational qualification criteria set by law forced many leaders who led the villages for generations to stay away from politics. The educated Bhutanese had hardly stayed in villages and served in the previous local governments. With new system, an almost complete overhaul in the leadership and thoughts were expected to swamp at the local governments.

The staggered electoral process started on 20 January 2011 with elections in a few districts. It took months for the ECB to complete. Primary reason behind the protracted process was lack of political enthusiasm for individuals to contest for local government leadership. The stringent rules barring people currently involved in any business or affiliated to any political group were other hindrances discouraging candidates. They were weighing benefits of getting elected as local

assembly members compared to being employed or running their own business.

The office of the local government was not attractive enough for people to leave job and join the race. They risk their future (if privately or publicly employed) in case of loss. The senior leadership and politically conscious mass had already joined the party politics. It was a hard search for individuals who are ready to risk the career and serve the public with fringe benefits. The legal provision of not requiring at least two candidates in the local government electorate provided some relief for many individuals. Many villages had only one candidate standing for the position. People voted yes or no. Majority received approval.

The local government elections were held after a delay of over two years. Chief Election Commissioner Kunzang Wangdi described it as "teething problems" (Sherpa, 2011) since the country is a beginner in the democratic practice and that culture and the mentality of the people had yet to come in tune with the democratic processes. Public perception was that since they had an elected government in Thimphu, there was no need for them to elect a local government. It was the result of an age-old administrative system where local governments were run by government employees and their appointees.

The delay was also caused by ineffective parliament. The lawmakers were new to law-making and parliamentary process. It took time for them to formulate laws on local government electoral process, power and privileges. Power sharing structure was the most contentious issue. Parliamentarians and policymakers were concerned about the financial independence and autonomy of the local bodies.

A local government candidate must be functionally literate and possesses skills adequate to discharge his/her responsibilities as certified by the Election Commission of Bhutan or possessing a formal degree in the case of candidates for Thrompon (mayor)¹³.

¹³ Local Government Act 2009 (21.e)

Under this provision, the ECB conducts a functional literacy test of everyone who intends to stand as a candidate for the local government election. The stated intention of the ECB was to filter individuals to choose the best candidates who can well serve the purpose. However, it appears to be an examination conducted by Civil Service Commission for government employment. Further, the examination has technically undermined the capacity of individuals who have failed to or barred to attend schools. Because a large section of Southern Bhutanese was barred from attending schools on security ground following 1990 unrest, their right to political participation is curtailed. While undermining those who did not attend school, the local government election law failed to capture the ground reality of the country and accept the universal fact that attending school was basic human rights and state has obligation to provide it.

Local Assemblies

Administrative decentralisation has occurred simultaneously with the formation of local government¹⁴. The Department of Local Government (DLG) under Home Ministry is responsible for local administrative functions (Brassad, 2008). Local administration uses the same structure as national government. Administrative officers are responsible for public service delivery in their jurisdiction and are accountable to the local government officials. While there is no devolved authority on administrative staff selection, district governments can redistribute their staff based on need, evaluate performance and recommend promotions (Thompson, 2020). It is unclear how the lines of accountability function in practice and whether administrative officers remain solely accountable to local government officers or whether their duty of care lies with the sectoral ministries. Horizontal accountability seems to exist at the district level, particularly with the role of the District Environment Officer who is mandated to commission multidisciplinary committees for all new projects (Thompson, 2010).

Local governments have no legislative powers but can make rules within their mandates and the laws set by the Parliament. DYT's have specific regulatory functions. GYT's can levy certain taxes like land and

¹⁴ Bhutan currently has 20 districts, 205 blocks and 1044 villages

entertainment taxes. Class A municipalities¹⁵ have greater legislative autonomy and can set property tax rates. Limited fiscal decentralisation has also been introduced alongside functional decentralisation. The central government has assigned up to 40% of its total budget to local government transfers (UNDP, 2006).

Block assemblies are the lowest level of representative assemblies. Generally, district's business headquarters are called Thromde. The major business hubs like Thimphu, Phuentsholing, Gaylegphug¹⁶ and Samdrup Jongkhar are given the status of municipality which function as self-governing urban governments that fall directly under the jurisdiction of the central government. Several Class B & C municipalities were established through parliamentary approval between 2015 and 2017. Proposal for other municipalities have been stalled since 2017 (Zangmo, 2017) when political parties failed to come into agreeing on terms to the proposal from the government. This is primarily because of the work needed to be done to redistribute constituencies as per legal requirements where a municipality must have at least 7 constituencies and no more than 10 – and a verdict passed by the Supreme Court (Dema, 2016) in response to the writ filed against government proposal.

Public Participation in Local Government

Voters still disregard the authority of the local government. It is largely because of limited authority it whirls. Also, voters prefer attention from the national government and parliament members who had assured everything during election. A NC assessment of local government reads, “One striking observation in the last few years has been that the elected members of parliament usually get inundated with issues raised by their constituents that are mostly administrative, which is well within the mandate of the local government functionaries to address them.”¹⁷

¹⁵ Dzongkha name - Thomdes

¹⁶ Gaylegphug was renamed Gelephu in late 1990s

¹⁷ Local Governance Assessment Report - Prepared by the Good Governance Committee for deliberation in the House (NC)

Local Development Planning Manual developed by Gross National Happiness Commission says the local government is required to ensure public participation in designing development activities. However, central and local governments remain in conflict over the demarcation of authority in many issues like roads & bridges¹⁸ construction, school administration, health facilities. The majority of the budgets for these development activities are controlled and administered by the central government.

The Block Assemblies and Municipalities host, generally, one annual meeting with people. Questions can be raised as to how qualitative and strategic the outcomes of such processes are and whether one meeting a year will invite constructive engagement of all stakeholders. In many cases, according to a report (National Council of Bhutan, undated), the annual meetings are merely an uncritical aggregation of respective Gewog and sector activities that are not well coordinated and therefore not providing a strategic plan or vision on how to create a coherent pathway for local development. There are myriad of community-based organisations and groups like community forestry group, citizen monitoring committees, cooperatives, self-help groups, livestock groups, etc, whose engagement can be critical to ensuring comprehensive and exhaustive inputs to planning, implementation and evaluation processes, whose engagement at present happen on ad-hoc basis and not in a coordinated approach.

Public scrutiny is not well developed. Local government are mandated to publish relevant information to the public either using public notice boards or through annual reports. There are few observational studies undertaken to evaluate whether gewogs comply with these requirements; a field visit in 2009, showed that few gewogs publish information on public notice boards or through annual reports. This could be a capacity issue, with gewogs unable to produce information like annual reports (Thompson, 2010).

¹⁸ One glaring example is the bridge over Mao River in Gelephu. Every successive government promised a bridge over the river connecting Gelephu with people across the river. The river spans for almost one kilometer in width.

Decentralisation in Bhutan has many challenges ahead, the largest of which is capacity issues at the local level and the lack of real fiscal and political autonomy. The recent lack of candidates for the local government elections demonstrates a concerning level of citizen lack of awareness and/or apathy to participation in politics and local governance. Getting citizens more involved would be key to ensuring these decentralisation policies are worked out and implemented in an efficient, transparent and corruption-free manner¹⁹.

Public Perception of Democracy and Freedom

In a statement in June 2019, Prime Minister Dr Lotay Tshering put a strong negation on the future of democracy in Bhutan. He said, ‘people are tired of democracy because of the very nature of the parties (Press statement from PMO).’ Tshering was referring to two major issues raised by the opposition party – increasing salary of the government employees and replacing Zhemgang with Sarpang district for government’s tourism flagship programme²⁰.

The PM blamed other parties for lack of ethics in politics and democratic chaos in the previous two terms. While he used his right to criticise other parties, he missed to realise the opposition has the same right to criticise his actions. The PM may have taken opportunity to incarcerate his opposition for not being supportive to his initiative, but the statement would provide avenues for those looking to cut the throat of democracy. It is not abnormal phenomenon in a democracy for opposition party to blame government for no reason. The PM’s words will reverberate to his actions and will have wider impact. It results in parties being culprits for failure of yet another ‘democracy’. This will help materialise the idea, which came in early days of the Bhutanese ‘democracy’, that Bhutanese citizens are not ready to accept a democracy and democratic culture.

¹⁹ European Union, Quality Support Facilities in the field of decentralization, Local Governance & Local Development. Letter of Contract N°2 2013/330793. Decentralization in Bhutan. October 2015.

²⁰ Read our take on Zhemgang Vs Sarpang issue here <http://www.bhutanwatch.org/sarpang-vs-zhemgang/>

The memories of 1990s are still alive – brutality people faced while asking for democratic rights. Despite consistent denial that there was no pressure (Palden & Wangdi. 2018) on King to relinquish his power is utterly false.

Conclusion

Ten years into the practice, the political leadership has not invested much in shaping a positive outlook for democratically elected leadership. UNDP rightly pointed out ‘Bhutanese politicians struggle to gain credibility with the electorate’ (UNDP, 2019). Two major sections are likely to negate the elected political leadership further. First – the stubborn royal supporter who look at every opportunity to increase the authority of the king. Second – those who have been tarnished for seeking democracy in 1990s. The western region primarily goes by first while South and east follow the second option. However, there are mixed bags too among these clusters. South and East may want a further reduction in royal prerogatives to empower citizens but may not have built their own leadership capability.

Bhutan lacks larger forums for wider inclusion of its citizens in political and democracy education. The only means for them to understand democracy is listening to contestants and casting ballots in periodical elections. Bhutan must widen the scope and mission of democracy education and reach out to the remotest part to ensure every citizen equally understand their role and responsibility in a healthy and prosperous democracy.

This young ‘democracy’ practically needs assertive and robust civic and political socialisation that produce future leadership who can fully understand the values, norms and culture of democracy. The regional experience of democracy is good enough to learn that without proper civic education and political socialisation, the democracy has derailed. This will create public mistrust and frustration on democracy and its core values.

The democracy in Bhutan must evolve into participatory and inclusive for it to remain relevant and active and to avoid future ethnic and

regional tensions. The early indications are not positive for a healthy democracy. It is time Bhutan understands democracy beyond ballots.

The evolution of culture requires time. Bhutanese society was ruled vertically. Consulting and engaging public and accepting their feedback in decision-making is a completely new phenomenon. King continues traveling to villages and talking to people – which should have been carried out by elected representatives. King's direct interaction with public must not influence the democratic process and people must rest their trust in their representative above their king. In a constitutional democracy, a direct engagement of king is not required for country's socio-economic development and political modernization (Wolf, 2012). We have adequately seen democracy failing where monarchy remains pro-active. His activism through De-suung, a practice of parallel government, has already undermined elected government.

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