

Political Culture and Democracy in Bhutan: An Insight

Rana Sonia Tez Bahadur*

Abstract

The democratic transition of Bhutan is often romanticised in popular media through the utopian projection of Gross National Happiness. Adhering to the democracy as tailored by the King is viewed by the Bhutanese as a gift to live by without questioning or even criticising. Accordingly, the paper will examine the political culture of Bhutan to give an insight into its process of democratic transition and functioning. It will attempt to understand the Bhutanese political culture to analyse the danger of inaccurate conclusions based on misconceptions not entirely true to Bhutan's reality. This article is written with the support of the ICSSR post-doctoral fellowship programme (2018-2019) on 'Democracy and Nationalism in Bhutan: Challenges and Prospects'. However, the responsibility for the facts stated, opinion expressed, and the conclusions drawn is entirely of the author.

Keywords: Political Culture, Democracy, Kingdom, Monarchy, Transition

1. Political Culture: An Introduction

Political culture refers to a distinctive and patterned form of political that consists of a set of widely held beliefs, values, norms and assumptions concerning the ways on how governmental,

* ICSSR Post Doctoral Fellow (2018-19), ICSSR, New Delhi & Assam University, Silchar, Assam, India; soniarana872@gmail.com

political, and economic life ought to be carried out. It creates a framework for political change and is unique to nations, states, and other groups. It influences the way people see their political world. Some political cultures place a high value on individual freedom while other cultures prize community solidarity. The stability of a political system is underlined by the relative success or failure of the assimilation of new attitudes into the existing value structure. For this, there is a need to effectively transmit the political culture from generation to generation. The means to transmit the same can be through means like political beliefs, political values and political attitude.

2. Political Culture: A Theoretical Study

Almond & Verba (1966) define political culture as political orientation, attitudes toward the political system and its various parts, and attitudes toward the role of the self in the system. Political orientation is a set of orientations that characterise the thinking and behaviour of people in individuals, groups, and nations toward the political system and its various parts, and attitudes toward the role of the self in the system. Political orientation is thus an integrated set of beliefs, values and attitudes toward politics. According to Almond & Verba, there are three kinds of political orientation:

- a) *The cognitive orientation* includes knowledge and information about the political system, its roles and the incumbents of these roles, and its inputs and outputs.
 - b) *Affective orientation* refers to reflecting the sentiments, feelings, and emotions about the political system, whether positive or negative. Affective orientation also includes its functions, participants and activities.
3. *Evaluative orientations* are the judgments and opinions about political objectives that typically involve the combination of values, standards and criteria with information and feelings.
- Almond & Powell's Typology of Political Culture

Almond & Powell (1966) based on the orientations discussed above outlined the following three types of political culture:

3.1. Parochial political culture

Parochial political culture is composed of people who have no political orientation towards political objects. In this type of political culture, citizens are only remotely aware of the presence of central government and live their lives near enough regardless of the decisions taken by the state. Citizens have no cognition orientation towards the political system and are unaware of the political phenomena. They have neither knowledge nor interest in politics. They have no orientation towards all components of political input, output, political system, or self-role. This type of political culture is congruent with a traditional political structure. This exists in a traditional society. The parochial approach however is limited. In the parochial approach, there is a limited frame of reference. People are unaware of politics, they do not have a secular understanding of the world, and there are no well-differentiated political structures. In this model, people have no cognitive orientations toward the political system. Societies characterised by this type of political culture do not expect anything positive from government, nor do they expect to participate in politics because it is seen as the elite domain. Furthermore, the government is seen as the enforcer of its own rules and consequently, the realm of politics is seen as one to be avoided.

3.2. Subject political culture

Subject political culture has people who have a passive orientation towards a political system and conceive themselves as having a minimum influence on the political process. In this type of political culture, citizens are aware of the central government and are heavily subjected to its decisions with little scope for dissent. The individual is aware of politics, its actors and institutions. It is effectively oriented toward politics, yet he is on the "downward flow" side of politics. People know about decision-making mechanisms. There is a political awareness but no confidence to air political views, thus there is an absence of participatory norms. This type of political culture is congruent with a centralised authoritarian structure. In this model, the people have cognition orientations towards only the output

aspects of the system. This tends to be manifested in a citizenry that expects positive action from the government, but that does not tend to be politically active themselves. They see politics as an elite domain only to be engaged in by those with power and influence.

3.3. Participant political culture

Participant political culture refers to people who respond positively to all political objects. Regarding this type of political culture, citizens can influence the government in various ways and they are affected by it. The individual is oriented towards all four components of politics (input, output, political system, and self-role). Here, the emphasis is on the role of the self. This encourages more and more participation and participation is of the highest value. There is an ability to criticise the authority and hold a positive orientation towards action. In this mode, people have cognitive orientations toward both the input and output aspects of the system. Societies which possess this type of political culture tend to have citizens with high expectations of government and personally participating in politics, if at no other time than voting in an election.

The above-mentioned three main types of political culture, there exist in political life special subcultures which express the interests and viewpoints of social, ethnic, territorial and other groups. These subcultures are characterised by their different outlooks, attitudes towards government and ruling elite, involvement in governing activity and the formation and control of political life. Political culture in some respects restricts the activity of the members of society due to the beliefs, feelings and values of the political processes and behaviour which are important parts of political culture. Although a political system and political culture are independent parts of a polity they are closely connected. One of the sources of the development and activity of political culture is legitimating the existing power and the political regime characteristic of that period of development. Its constituents, such as values, directions, and stereotypes, play a major role in preserving the existing political system.

Almond & Powell however argued that there is never a single political culture. The three categories of political orientations are not always present in a pure form rather; they are intermixed in many situations of political culture. The nature of national political culture is a mixture of several political cultures. Accordingly, the three typologies of political culture can be further classified into three sub-types of political culture:

3.1.1. Parochial and subject

This type of political culture represents a shift from parochial orientation to subject orientation. In such a political culture more and more people are oriented to a centralised authority than the village and tribal authority. Here the parochial loyalties gradually get weathered and the inhabitants develop a greater awareness of the central authority.

3.1.2. Subject and participant

This type of political culture represents a shift from subject political orientation to participant political orientation. In such a political culture people generally, on the one hand, develop an activist tendency and participate in the process, but on the other hand, there are those individuals too, who possess passive orientations and remain at the receiving end of the decision-making process.

3.1.3. Parochial and participant

This type of political culture represents the parochial orientation in the individuals whereas the norms introduced require a participant's political orientation. In such type of political culture, there emerges a problem of harmony between the political culture and political norm. However, they suggest that a participatory political culture fits a liberal democratic regime. In addition to that, the participant political culture as a type of political culture is congruent with a democratic political structure and it can be called "Civic Culture" (Almond & Powell, 1966)

4. Finer's Typology of Political Culture

Finer (1974) gave his concept of political culture and discusses different categories in terms of his typology of political culture. He

has identified the following four categories in the typology of political culture:

4.1. Mature political culture

This political culture exists when there is widespread public approval of the procedure for transfer of power; a belief that the persons in power have the right to govern and issue orders; the people are attached to the political institutions and there is a well-mobilised public opinion.

4.2. Developed political culture

This type of political culture occurs where the civil institutions are highly developed and the public is well organised into powerful groups but from time to time there arises a dispute on the questions of who and what should constitute the sovereign authority and how power should be transferred.

4.3. Low political culture

This is one in which the political system is weakly and narrowly organised; there is a lack of consensus on the nature of the political system and its procedures. In addition to this, the public attachment to the political system is fragile.

4.4. Minimal political culture

This is found in a country where articulate public opinion does not exist and the government can always ignore public opinion. Political culture is decided by force or the threat of force. A person or institution capable of asserting itself can enforce its will and the extent of one's authority is directly related to the degree of force at one's disposal.

5. Democracy: A Conceptual Analysis

Scholars have long conceptualised the meanings of democracy. To Rousseau, democracy is a social contract in which an individual becomes a part of an association, which will defend and protect each member, and each member in return will unite with others to express "general will" while remaining as free as before. In contrast, Schumpeter defines democracy as a system where those

who command more support than the competing individual or teams get to rein the government. Przeworski, diversifying from Schumpeter, defines democracy as the possibility of being able to change governments in a non-violent fashion through voting. O'Donnell and Schmitter view democracy as a system with at least minimal procedures such as a secret ballot, universal adult suffrage, regular elections, partisan competition, and executive accountability. In this study, democracy is conceptualised as a system in which citizens can express and exercise their general will freely through procedures including voting, freedom of expression, and the rule of law.

Robert Dahl after a brief history of the development of democracy in his *'On Democracy'* provides a theoretical analysis and defence of democracy. Robert Dahl reaffirms the democratic process "as the most reliable means for protecting and advancing the good and interests of all the persons subject to collective decisions". He defends democracy against guardianship or the view that only a specially qualified elite can govern for the common good. For Dahl, a democratic process must make effective participation and voting equality available to all adults who are subject to the binding collective decisions of society. Democracy must also provide citizens with opportunities for understanding civic issues, as well as allow them to have control over the matters that reach the decision-making agenda. Dahl builds his case for the democratic process from the fundamental notion of the intrinsic equality of all persons. Intrinsic equality, in Dahl's view, means that the interests of all persons should be given equal consideration in making collective decisions. The best way to assure the equal consideration of interests is through a democratic process where each person is entitled to participate in collective decision-making. Dahl favours a strong presumption that every adult is the best judge of his or her interests (Dahl, 2000).

Margaret Canovan asserts that it is misleading to characterise democracy simply as an inclusive system. On the contrary, democracy is inclusive only for the citizens living in a well-defined political community. Its most fundamental prerequisite is the existence of a close political community, or more specifically, an established group of people who live within clearly defined

geographical boundaries. Unable to use coercion extensively, democracy has to rely more upon a willing identification with the polis on the part of the citizens than more repressive forms of polity (Canovan, 2001).

6. Bhutan's Political System: A Brief History

The hereditary monarchy was established in Bhutan only in 1907. Before 1907 the political system in Bhutan was mainly diarchal in structure with two sovereign powers the *Shabdung* in religious affairs and the *Druk Desi* in temporal affairs. However with the death of the reigning *Shabung* in 1903 and the *Druk Desi* in the following year, *Je Khenpo* who was the Chief Abbot of the Central Monastic Body of Bhutan and considered the reincarnation of the first *Shabdung* succeeded both the title of *Shabdung* as well as the *Druk Desi*.

The first *Druk Gyalpo* (the King and the head of the state of the Kingdom of Bhutan) Gongsar Ugyen Wangchuck created new political institution based on succession system previously unknown to the Bhutanese. Although his capacity to govern Bhutan was not doubted but legitimating his rule was the problem that the first *Druk Gyalpo* faced amidst questions about his right to rule by both secular and lay. Accordingly in order to legitimise his new institution to both the elites and masses he adopted various measures. He appropriated some of the titles and symbolisms previously associated with the *Shabdung*, thereby maintaining continuity in the outer manifestations of the authority system. Finally, he persuaded the entire civil and religious elite to sign a document indicating acceptance of himself as *Druk Gyalpo* and recognising the Wangchuck family as the hereditary dynasty of Bhutan.

For a hereditary monarchy, the succession system must be precisely defined and proceed without serious challenge for dynastic legitimacy to be fully accepted. Bhutan's monarchy successfully established such a tradition, as the Wangchuck family continued to become the *Druk Gyalpos* since Gongsar Ugyen Wangchuck ascended to the throne. Through carefully conceived and implemented policies that gradually eliminated or neutralised the

principal sources of opposition to the hereditary monarchy. They continued to rule without incidence and under the prescribed principles of succession. The comparative newness of the monarchy in Bhutan seems to have faded as the legitimacy of the Wangchuk dynasty is now firmly established (Mehra, 1981).

7. The transition from Theocracy to Modernity

It was under the Third Druk Gyalpo Jigme Dorji Wangchuck in 1952, that Bhutan started to change the traditional theocratic political system into a modernised western political system i.e. the democratic government. The first important step toward a modern political system began in 1953 when the *Tshogdu* (National Assembly) was composed of representatives from every district in Bhutan, the monastic establishment, and the civil administration. It was established to involve people in the decision-making process of the country. Following the successful introduction of the Parliament, in 1965, the King introduced another institution known as the *Lodey Tshogdey* (the Royal Advisory Council) to establish a modern structured government combining monarchical and democratic principles. (Rose, 1997, pp. 152-153)

The fourth king Jigme Singye Wangchuck's accession to the throne in 1974 further witnessed a fierce process of both political and administrative decentralisation. He aimed to delegate authority from central agencies to the district administration to encourage people's participation in the planning and implementation of development activities in their areas. Thus continuing with the decentralisation process, *Dzongkhag Yargay Tshogdu* (DYT) was established in 1981 to formulate, approve and implement *gewog* (block) and *dzongkhag* (district) plan activities. To encourage citizens to participate in the process of decision-making the fourth king Jigme Singye Wangchuck, established District Development Committee (DYTs) in every district of Bhutan. It thus empowered decision-making at the grassroots level and brought greater participation of the people in nation-building activities. (Rizal, 2001, pp. 37-39)

8. The onset of Democracy in Bhutan

The genesis of the constitutional process began in Bhutan on 4th September 2001, when fourth king Jigme Singye Wangchuck decreed a historic command that a written constitution be promulgated for the Kingdom. Accordingly, he briefed the Council of Ministers, the Chief Justice of Bhutan and the Chairman of the Royal Advisory Council on the need to draft a written constitution. In his view, the adoption of a written constitution would go beyond defining the roles of the organs of the Government and its people. He envisioned that the written constitution adopted in times of peace to establish a democratic system would be in the best interest of the Bhutanese people (Tobgye, 2014). The Bhutanese Constitution thus aimed to reflect the aspirations of a rapidly modernising state, ensuring Security, Sovereignty, Justice, Peace and Prosperity, and upholding the fundamental rights and well-being of the People. On the Ninth Day of December 2006, the fourth king Jigme Singye Wangchuck handed power to Crown Prince Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck who maintained his father's legacy of transforming the kingdom into a parliamentary democracy.

Under the leadership of the fifth King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, Bhutan achieved its transition to parliamentary democracy. With its first parliamentary election in 2008, a democratic system of government best suited to Bhutan was established under the Constitution adopted on 18th July 2008. The two political parties registered by the Election Commission of Bhutan to contest the election in 2008, were the Bhutanese Peace and Prosperity Party (DPT, for Druk Phuensum Tshogpa) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP). The election witnessed a dramatic victory for Jigme Y Thinley's Bhutanese Peace and Prosperity Party which won 45 seats out of 47 seats making him the first-ever elected Prime Minister of Bhutan on 9th April 2008. Thus with its first general election, Bhutan established itself as a democratic constitutional monarchy with King Jigme Singye Namgyal Wangchuck as the head of the state and the executive power vested in the cabinet headed by the Prime Minister (Sebastian, 2016).

9. Bhutan's Democracy: A Gift from the King?

The historical record indicates that democracy is rarely established in any country without widespread popular struggle and mobilisation, sometimes over a lengthy period and at considerable personal cost. Traditional rulers, military dictators, life presidents and foreign occupiers do not give up power voluntarily, but only when their regime has become widely discredited and popular mobilisation has convinced them that their continuation in power can only provoke deepening disorder and no governance. In other words, democracy does not come handed down from above. However, unlike most of the world's pro-democracy movements, Bhutan's journey from absolute monarchy to democracy began from the palace. It moved towards free elections not because of popular sentiments, but because of the efforts of Bhutan's former King Jigme Singye Wangchuck who began the process by disseminating a draft constitution to Bhutan's people. Democracy in Bhutan is therefore viewed as a gift from the golden throne. It was this top-down approach which gives the Bhutanese democracy a unique character (Rizal, 2015).

Bhutan has completed three parliamentary elections since 2008. However, holding the state-controlled elections alone does not present a prolific plinth for a democratic transition. Bhutan's democracy although lacks large-scale violence, they are not free of challenges. One such challenge is the pronouncement that religious persons are not entitled to vote (Section 184, Bhutan Election Act, 2008). There were almost 70, 000 monks, nuns and lay priests in Bhutan who were restricted from running for office or voting in the 2008 parliamentary elections following an Election Act which mandated that religion and religious figures remain "above politics". Bhutanese government assert that Buddhist monks must transcend worldly discrimination and partiality. To cast a vote, one has to choose and to choose, one has to discriminate. Due to this act, 10% of the potential voting body is kept away in Bhutan. The law further bars non-Bhutanese individuals who are married to citizens from promoting a religion other than Buddhism. The 1980 Marriage Act also states that a Bhutanese married to a non-Bhutanese shall not be entitled to facilities enjoyed by other

citizens, including the distribution of land, cash loans, and education or training abroad (Dorji, 2009).

Another challenge is the relatively low levels of press freedom in Bhutan. Although the Constitution of Bhutan guarantees rights of free speech, opinion and expression, the government is often intolerant of criticisms. The 2014 Reporters without Borders ranked Bhutan 92 out of 180 countries in terms of media freedom. The mass media practice self-censorship and do not publish stories which are very critical of the government. All protesters must also first obtain government approval before staging public demonstrations to avoid conflict with the government. The Civil Society Organization (CSO) Authority was established by the Civil Society Act of Bhutan in 2007. The government mandated the CSO Authority to oversee the accountability and transparency of civil society operations. Critics fear the CSO Act could result in restrictions rather than the promotion of independent civil society organisations. Moreover, the government allows workers to form workers' associations but does not allow for the formation of unions or strikes (Rizal, 2015).

Bhutan's sixth Five-Year Plan (1987-92) adopted 'preservation and promotion of Bhutanese culture' as one of its nine policy objectives. In this context king, Jigme Singye issued the manual of *Driglam Namzha* published in 1999. Karma Ura defined *Driglam Namzha* as 'the way of conscious harmony'. It involved a system of rules of physical conduct and external forms, applied on an individual basis to forge a sense of nationhood. Its essence was to follow a code of conduct that will promote a well-ordered society where every individual member is a proud and responsible citizen of the country. The royal Government recognised the importance of promoting *Driglam Namzha* for maintaining and strengthening the unique national identity to ensure and safeguard the continued well-being and sovereignty of the Bhutanese nation and people.

Under *Driglam Namzha* all Bhutanese citizens needed to observe the practice of wearing 'Gho' and 'Kira' while visiting the *Dzongs* (parliament), monasteries, government offices and institutions in the country. It was made compulsory by law for Bhutanese to wear the traditional dress: for men and boys the *gho*, a long gown hitched up to the knee so that its lower half resembles a skirt, for

women and girls the *kira*, an ankle-length robe somewhat resembling a kimono (Rizal, 2015). It is important to note that by tradition, Bhutan is a Buddhist *Drukpa* monarchy. It is however a country in which predominantly Hindu Nepalese known as *Lhotshampas* have been living in the southern foothills for centuries in addition to the *Scharchops* and *Ngalungs* minority ethnic communities. It is thus a multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-ethnic country. The mandate to wear the traditional dress of the majoritarian community of *Drukpa* which was viewed as the national costume to prove one's loyalty to the King and the country was unquestionably new for these minority ethnic groups. Some National Assembly members from southern Bhutan requested that they be exempted from wearing the national dress. The National Assembly however decided that all people must observe the norms laid out in *Driglam Namzha*. Consequently, such enforcement of the majoritarian ethnic culture on the minorities led to unrest among the *Lhotshampas* who then raised demands for self-government in Bhutan (Sinha, 2016).

The *Lhotshampa* issue resurfaced when four bomb blasts took place on January 20, 2008. The groups associated with exiled Nepalese were held responsible for the attacks alleging that they were trying to sabotage the election process. The fact that Bhutan has yet to come up with a permanent solution for the *Lhotshampa* refugees is a major setback to the romanticised glimmer of royal democracy. It is thus fitting for the early stage of transition, where the preservation of traditional institutions and customs, and loyalty to *Tsa-wa-sum* continue to remain the primary tenets of the government. *Tsa-wa-sum* is about how all Bhutanese should show their loyalty and service towards the country, King and the government. It focuses more on bringing different nationalities within the country under one single statist Bhutanese nationality. The government attempts to instil a stronger national identity in people which would overpower other sub-national or regional or ethnic nationalities present in the country. Accordingly, Schreder has succinctly presaged that "the reality of Bhutan's democratic transition is much messier than myth, predictable, filled with ethnic conflict and serious challenges to coherent national identity." (Rizal, 2015)

The political parties that participated in the 2008 national elections, i.e., Bhutan Peace and Prosperity Party (DPT) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) lacked different ideological perspectives giving no real choices to the people of Bhutan, especially the ethnic minorities. They shared similar manifestos and both party leaders publicly acknowledged their allegiance to obey the King's desire to work towards the pursuit of Gross National Happiness (GNH). The government regarded Bhutan's People's Party of Nepalese of Bhutanese origin exiled in Nepal as illegal and anti-national as it sought repatriation of *Lhotshampa* refugees and democratic reforms. It was denied the right to contest elections and was prohibited from conducting activities inside Bhutan (Mathou, 2009).

Gross National Happiness which was introduced by the fourth king in the late 1980s has become the accepted label for the distinct Bhutanese development concept. The concept of GNH is essentially a summarisation of the basic tenets of *Vajrayana* Buddhism, the state religion of Bhutan (Rizal, 2015). Under this ideology, the king provides four major pillars of GNH such as sustainable development, preservation and promotion of cultural values, the conservatism of the natural environment, and establishment of good governance. The fourth king stated that the GNH is more important than the Gross National Product as it focussed mainly on socio-economic revision towards the promotion of happiness as its primary value. Under this theory, equal importance is given to the social, economic, spiritual, cultural and environmental needs of the Bhutanese people. The concept of GNH has as such become the philosophical foundation for the entire policy-making process in the country (Sebastian, 2015).

However the economic development based on mixed economic philosophy and GNH to obtain maximum output, employment and income through joint efforts of public and private sectors failed as the radical economic policy of neoliberalism pushed by governments smashed the intermediary economic structure constituting small-scale industries, indigenous means of livelihoods, and social economy producing crony capitalism. Privatisation created a powerful small circle of wealthy business elites instead of fostering the growth of the middle class with a commitment to continued reform. In contrast to the ideals of GNH,

privatisation created new economic elite of Bhutan that remained closely tied to the state (Rizal, 2015).

Democracy in Bhutan, therefore, appears to be characterised by a highly personalized hereditary system, absence of public opinions, lack of strong opposition party and influential bureaucracy. In the absence of adequate socio-economic pre-conditions at the micro and me-so level, the concept of decentralisation lacks true meaning. The decision-making process continues to be very narrow involving only a smaller number of elites. The elites are virtually unencumbered by the need to cater to popular prejudices, preferences and interests. It has adopted a policy of directed change without acquiring new skills and capabilities. The government consists of members recommended only based on traditional social criteria such as family, caste, religion and kinships. This democratic change as such does not involve real devolution of power. It is simply an attempt to facilitate a semblance of popular participation without broadening the social base. It is romanticised and orientalist in popular media through a utopian projection of Gross National Happiness. Thus, in trying to understand democracy in Bhutan, there lurks the danger of inaccurate conclusions based on misconceptions not entirely true to Bhutan's reality.

10. Conclusion

Given Almond & Powell's typology of Political Culture, Bhutan's political culture can be characterised to be a subject political culture. This is because Bhutan although became a parliamentary democratic country in 2008, the people still hold a strong affective orientation towards the traditional cultural and religious values. With the initiative to establish democracy being taken by the monarch, the Bhutanese people continue to view the monarchy as the real ruler of Bhutan. The people are as such struggling to supplant the values of democracy and the concept of constitutional monarchy. In addition to this, the stronghold of local elitism in the government has made people passive participants. The domination of royal family members in the administrative and bureaucratic system and the representatives of the people coming from the rich family background is a sad reality of the Bhutanese administrative

system. Accordingly command from above continues to remain a bitter truth beneath the rhetoric of democratic decentralisation.

A close look at the social structure of Bhutan reveals that it is still a traditional society. Not only is the majority of the population employed in agriculture, but they also exist almost no noteworthy middle class that could facilitate change through strong socio-political movements. The political changes have therefore been very low. However, the rising level of education among a growing and youthful population together with globalisation and social networking has caused a significant transformation in Bhutan's youth culture with Western influences of materialism. Yet, the political will and pressure from the public have not reached a critical level. There is a political awareness but no confidence to air political views making it largely a subject political culture congruent with a centralised authoritarian structure.

Concerning Finer's typology of Political Culture, one can say that Bhutan largely exhibits the features of a minimal political culture as there is no opposition or questioning of governmental policies and the articulation of public opinion is quite poor. In addition to this, a minimal political culture is decided by force or threat of force. Such kind of tailored political culture can be witnessed in Bhutan in the wake of its enforcement of the *Drukpa* dress code on all the people of Bhutan irrespective of their ethnic affiliation. The use of the iron hand could further be seen by the Bhutanese political system to deal with the ensuing open rebellion by the *Lhotshampa* community during the 1990s. According to the *Lhotshampas*, their public call for a restoration of their ethnic minority rights triggered a wave of government repression and violence, culminating in the mass exodus of the *Lhotshampas* to the refugee camps in south-eastern Nepal. The Bhutanese authority ordered the closure of local *Lhotshampa* schools and development programs. The civil unrest was put down by the army and police. Hundreds were arrested and imprisoned without proper trial. The *Lhotshampa* refugees are continued to be denied Bhutanese citizenship. More recent allegations have surfaced of restricting the voting rights of some 80,000 *Lhotshampa* that still lived in Bhutan during the country's first-ever elections, held in early 2008.

Almond & Powell put forward that political orientations are interrelated and may be combined in various ways. The possibility of a combination of these orientations cannot be ruled out even in an individual when he considers various aspects of the political system. It is therefore not always feasible to compartmentalise political culture into strict typologies as one political culture can exhibit features of two or more different types of political orientations. In the case of Bhutan, the preservation of traditional institutions and customs and loyalty to Tsa-Wa-Sum continues to be the primary tenets of the government. It excluded the groups, which don't fit with the straight jacket of one nation and one people. The real locus of power lay with the king and not with the council of ministers who sought to maximise their power by seeking and securing the king's favours and glorifying his reign. Accordingly, clientelism and patronage network operate strongly in Bhutan. All of this makes the modest attempt by the king to establish democracy in Bhutan appear more like rhetoric for the ruling elites to consolidate their power. The Bhutanese populace being new to democratic transition exhibits complete faith in its monarchy for their socio-economic well-being. It therefore most certainly exhibits a subject and minimal political culture.

However, the last parliamentary election witnessed a gradual rise in political participation by the citizens. Not only that, there has been a positive shift in Bhutan's cultural policies whereby King Jigme Sigye Namgyal Wangchuck has undertaken efforts to promote the political and cultural interests of the minorities by including members of the community in the law-making body. Inaugural of *Hindu* temples and promotion of mass celebration of festivals of *Lhotshampas* by the King is another way by which the Bhutanese government is trying to integrate rather than assimilate the cultural minorities within its manifold. The mandate to wear the *Drukpa* dress code to government offices continues. Learning the *Drukpa* language remains compulsory in school which is yet to include minority languages in their curriculum. Nonetheless, one can certainly see a gradual shift in the political culture of Bhutan from being subject and minimal to becoming participative and mature.

References

- Almond, Gabriel A. & Powell, Bingham G. (1966). "Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach". Boston: Little, Brown.
- Canovan Margaret. (2001). "Democracy and Nationalism". In *Democratic Theory Today: Challenges for the 21st Century*, edited by April Carter and Geoffrey Stokes. Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers.
- Dahl Robert. (2000). *On Democracy*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Gellner Ernest. (2009). *Nations and Nationalism*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- G N Mehra, (1981). *Bhutan Land of the Peaceful Dragon*, Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd.
- Gyeltshen, K. & Sripokangkul, S. (2017). "Bhutan's Unique Transition to Democracy and its Challenges." *Journal of MCU Peace Studies* 5, No. 5.
- Mathou, T. (2009). "The Politics of Bhutan: Change in Continuity." *Journal of Bhutan Studies*.
- Lyonpo Sonam Tobgye, The Constitution of Bhutan: Principles and Philosophies, www.judiciary.gov.bt/education/constitutionphilosophies.pdf
- Phuntsho, K. "Bhutan's Unique Democracy: A First Verdict." Retrieved from https://www.opendemocracy.net/article/institutions/bhutan_s_unique_democracy_a_first_verdict
- Rizal Dhruba. (2001). *Bhutan Decentralisation and Good Governance*, Delhi: Adroit Publishers.
- Rizal Dhruba. (2015). *The Royal Semi-Authoritarian Democracy in Bhutan*. USA: Lexington Press.
- Sebastian Sarish. (2016). *Parliamentary Democracy in Bhutan: A Journey from Tradition to Modernity*. New Delhi: Adroit Publishers.

Sinha A. C. (2016). "Evicted from Home, nowhere to go: the case of Lhotshampas from Bhutan". In *Nepali Diaspora in a Globalised Era*, edited by Tanka B. Subba and A.C. Sinha. New Delhi: Routledge Publication.

Stephen, A. Linz Juan J. & Minoves Juli F. "*Democratic Parliamentary Monarchies*". *Journal of Democracy* 25, No. 2 (2014): 35-50.

Political Culture, <http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in>.