

Leadership in Bhutan: Gross National Happiness (GNH) and Human Values

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Abstract

Bhutan which had been isolated from rest of the world is now immensely focused on principles of happiness and well-being by adopting a new development philosophy popularly known as Gross National Happiness (GNH). It is this leadership style used by our great monarchs in stabilizing the country free from the very upheavals and stress in this world.

In many leadership styles, their correlation with the legacies or related outcomes from the use of those leadership skills is vaguely shown in many of the research and the findings.

This study examines how leadership styles used in Bhutan had generated very unique legacies by our great monarchs in Bhutan. A qualitative interpretive phenomenological analysis case study approach was used to study formal and aspiring leaders in Bhutan: their perceptions of leadership styles used by our monarchs and their resultant legacies.

A total of 40 formal and aspiring leaders participated in this study and survey questionnaires were also used to collect data from those participants who chose not to participate in the interviews. The study findings provide a new approach for what leadership styles will give rise to unique legacies. This study also contributes examples and research data from the Bhutanese context to the larger body of literature in the field of educational research.

The findings are based on lived and ongoing leadership styles used by Bhutanese great monarchs who in turn had generated the unique legacies which had been unexplored and remain intact till date. The study also shows the relationships existed between leadership styles and its resultant outcomes.

Keywords: *gross national happiness, human values, charismatic leadership, unique legacies, transformational leadership, charismatic leadership*

1. Introduction

Generally, every living being wants happiness and to humanity it became a most indisputable quest for life and collective obligation of state to grant in this contemporary world. Anielski (2007) vividly coined that happiness is a common aspiration of humanity and that too the ultimate aim of human existence. Accordingly, Aristotle in one of the books by Kesebir and Diener (2008) stated, "happiness is the meaning and purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence". It is significant from all the aforementioned articles and books by various authors that happiness is the most crucial and more critical areas of focus that a state should prioritize to its subjects and amend the policies that cater happiness in place. The happiness is taken as the top most priority in Bhutan and all the functional aspects like policies, regulations and others, right from planning till execution must prioritized happiness. Likewise many countries in present times have introduced happiness and well-being as measurable assets and explicit goals to supplement Gross Domestic Product (Ahmed, 2010) because increased material wealth and economy growth as "captured by GDP does not lead to increased happiness and life fulfillment" (Kesebir & Diener, 2008). Hence, it is imperative for the nations to seek for a holistic approach that balances material and non-material aspects of development.

While this holds true and significant in Bhutan due to its differences in leadership styles adopted and nurtured to its subject with perennial rule of very holistic approach, it is indeed very crucial to relate leadership styles and its outcomes. The leaderships and outcomes are the two most important aspects that will create bonds between leaders and fellow citizens that will address the issues of transparency, and accountability governance. Elsewhere in the history of absolute monarchy and dictatorships that were prevalent in many countries, the trust

of leaders and fellow citizens were at the verge of deteriorations and many political upheavals had more ravaging issues that had a series of issues. The extreme issues are abdication of throne in case of monarchy and debarred of some position in case of dictatorship as depicted by Britain interest in Indian sub-continent (Bose & Jalal, 2001).

When the world had witnessed bloodshed and riots especially in the political system that is connected with absolute monarchy or dictatorship, the main drawbacks presented in these political systems is decisions and executions which are held at superior executives and the chain of command is very lengthy that enables its subjects to create delusion and some discrepancies and never meeting their needs where freedom of expressions and concerns remain very vague.

Bhutan is perhaps the last Shangri-La dominated by Mahayana sect of Buddhism even to at this very age and it is effigy of richness that blends the essence of holistic development with protection of its environment. Currently, more than 74% of land is under forest cover and more than half of its land is protected as biological corridors and wild life sanctuaries (NEC Report, 2011). This richness is directly related to the leadership styles used by the monarchs in Bhutan that dwells the very unique legacies in the present era which widens the interest of discovering some typical legacies or the outcomes.

The majority of Bhutanese supported those monarchs in Bhutan that used compassionate leadership styles which is similar to transformational and charismatic leadership styles. The compassionate leadership style focus on the utilitarianism approach that enhances societal livelihood and accordingly it has given rise to very unique legacies which rarely exist in the world. The use of compassionate leadership style had given rise to holistic development philosophy known as Gross National Happiness (GNH), democratization of the political state from monarchy form of government and lastly human values which is very important in this contemporary world.

2. Objectives

General Objective: To evaluate specific leadership styles used by great monarchs in Bhutan that resulted into very unique legacies or the outcomes from that use.

Specific Objective: - To identify various leadership styles used by all the monarchs in Bhutan ranging from the first king to the present (Fifth) king.

- To identify very unique legacies that had gained popularity and worldwide attention from use of specific leadership styles.
- To evaluate the lived and ongoing leadership styles of monarchs as depicted by former and aspiring young leaders in Bhutan.
- To relate leadership styles with the legacies.

3. Material and Methods

The present research and findings about the leadership styles and its respective outcomes are very narrow and limited and thereby narrowing the researcher's core finding and linking leadership styles and its outcomes, the researcher chose a descriptive research method which is very relevant to the researcher's field of research.

The focus of inquiry in this study is to examine unique leadership styles that will cater the unique legacy or the outcomes in Bhutan and can be an example to rest of the world. To generate data for analysis and to contribute to the larger body of literature, a qualitative research approach was chosen. The main research question is: "How leadership styles in Bhutan had enabled the formulation of very unique outcomes in Bhutan?"

Through a qualitative research approach the researcher intended to gain a better understanding of effective leadership styles and enabling unique outcomes that will be perennial and lifelong practices by aspiring and younger leaders in Bhutan. To contribute to the larger body of literature on the relationships between leadership styles and its unique outcomes as shown by Strauss and Corbin (1998) asserted that qualitative methods can be used to better understand any phenomenon about which little is yet known. The

various ways and most easy method of collecting the data was designed although most of the Bhutanese villages had inaccessibility by road and air transport is negligence due to bad weather conditions that disfavor the mode of transportation.

There are a number of ways to obtain data suitable for IPA as well as for a case study. Yin (2009) recommended six forms of data collection in case studies: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation, and physical artifacts. Of all the data collection sources, interviewing and observation are most frequently used in qualitative studies in my collection of data. The number of participants was set at 40 from various professional whom I have grouped into three. The first group refers to formal leaders who have served with our monarch and sharing about leadership roles and legacies while the second group represents those aspiring leaders who are serving their monarchs at this very age and the last group represent random populations especially to gather data on how they look into their monarchs.

Of three types of interview processes which are : 1. Highly structured or standardized interviews where specific questions and the order of questions to be asked are predetermined, 2. The second is the unstructured or informal interview where questions and order are not determined ahead of time but are open-ended, flexible, and exploratory on the specific topic areas and 3. The third type is the semi-structured interview that it is a mix of structured and unstructured questions (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The researcher has taken into consideration the first and lasts types of interview that enables the researcher to find relation leadership styles with its related legacies.

In terms of design, quantitative research is structured in nature, having predetermined specific questions and answers. The data is collected mostly using surveys and questionnaires, analyzed deductively and described statistically. The interview was either conducted through email, telephone and even to online basis spread across six districts in Bhutan. After collection of data from all the 40 participants are made, the researcher analyzed the collected data. In an interpretative phenomenological approach, the researcher is the primary analytical instrument and his/her beliefs are required to make meanings from the experiences of other individuals. The meanings are acquired through a constant engagement with the transcript and a process of interpretation that requires the researcher to reflect and to think critically and sensitively.

In the last stage of data analysis, the final relationship of leadership styles used and its very unique legacies were translated into narrative accounts. The participants' responses were presented with a narrative argument supported by verbatim extracts from the transcripts to support the case or make an argument. Due care was taken to distinguish clearly between what the participant said and the way the researcher interpreted or accounted for the information.

4. Result and Discussion

The first theme, how leadership styles in Bhutan had enabled the formulation of very unique outcomes in Bhutan? Which evolved from the following sub-themes: What leadership styles induced the subjects and create everlasting bonds with our great monarchs? And other includes what leadership practices do our monarchs in Bhutan use to give rise to a unique legacy?

Moreover, IPA suggests the use of precise extracts to fully represent the participants' experiences. Therefore, the extracts presented in this study have been taken precisely from the transcribed interviews without any alteration. However, changes occurred to the quotes only when the information required clarification, interpretation, and understanding from the researcher's point of view, perhaps because of grammar.

Compassionate Leadership style

Bhutan and its people had enjoyed 100 years of monarchy under our great Wangchuck dynasty who is credited for raising strong and vibrant Bhutan free from all threats in the past as well as in present in this globalized world. Leadership styles used by our great monarchs refer to types of leadership styles as prevalent in other literatures and other studies that corresponds to exactness of use of it. However, the findings from this

study revealed that all leadership styles used results into very specific and unique legacies that become very important aspects of humanity.

Of many leadership styles prevalent in a lot of research, owing to our political aspects and nature of government, presently Bhutanese has had five hereditary monarchs ruling the government. All these monarchs depicted the common traits and use of similar leadership styles. The leadership styles used by all our monarchs on the degree of commonness is transformational and charismatic leadership styles. Transformational leadership is all about initiating change in organizations, groups, oneself and others. Transformational leaders motivate others to do more than they originally intended and often even more than they thought possible while charismatic leadership styles are those that manifests his or her revolutionary power.

But in a true sense, the monarchs in Bhutan depicted the blend of both transformational and charismatic leadership styles which has given rise to compassionate leaders. The compassionate leader refers to two things as lively examples and experiences owing to 100 years of successful monarchy in Bhutan. The two things that are composite in leaderships in Bhutan are:

a. Subjects perceptions of leaders as a spiritual entity

This is the most exclusive and extreme reverence of subject to their leaders. Just as the “Great Man Theory” states leaders are born not created”, the monarchs in Bhutan are true manifestation of god in human being as depicted in many Buddhist spiritual texts and other sources. The subjects put their leader to the most extremity as source of worship as well as epitome of reliever from any kind of sufferings.

The monarchs in Bhutan who had created history in ruling the country had championed in nature of governing and building of the nation from part and partial who is credited in present day for their uniqueness in government system as well transition from absolute monarchy to democracy which is attributes of gods for the welfare of its subjects.

b. Leader perception of its subject

The compassionate leaders are those leaders that work tirelessly and selflessly for bringing change in lives of its subjects through easier means without shifting the burden to its fellow countrymen. The leaders to have those traits need to first involve in the ground level of hardships and have inferences on being poor, remote and backwardness.

For instance, all our monarchs had real life experiences on ground level population and have zeal to believe in shared responsibility and uplifting the tragedy of being raised from the poverty line. Presently, our reigning great Fifth King had married a commoner for involving into the very ground-level population and had travelled both lengths and breadths of country to have personal digs into his peoples’ issues and addressing the issues.

Till date, the students from very backward and also economically disadvantaged family are being raised up by his majesty the king under his special programme known as Tozey which funds everything for raising the children. The majority of these groups include students which at present enjoy schooling lives and other benefits from his majesty the king of Bhutan.

The king in particular grant land for landless Bhutanese and also make frequent visits to all the schools in Bhutan to really explore their issues and address these erupted issues personally by his majesty the king. From above perceptions drawn, we can conclude that a compassionate leader is a blend of both transformational and charismatic leadership. The compassionate leadership is denoted various traits but when generalized, the compassionate leadership styles institutes various traits known as visionary, farsightedness, religious minded, selflessness and tirelessness as perceived by Bhutanese to their monarchs.

With aforementioned leadership styles which are the blend of transformational and charismatic leadership styles called by Bhutanese as a compassionate leader, the final legacies of those leadership skills as depicted by our monarchs had given rise to very unique legacies.

Compassionate Leadership style and its Unique Legacies

1. Gross National Happiness (GNH)

Gross National Happiness, as the guiding philosophy of Bhutan's development process, was the brainchild of His Majesty the great fourth King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, soon after his enthronement in 1972. Over the decades and still present, many intellectuals and experts had led to increasing elaboration of this concept as well as its practice. The differences in interpretations of its meaning and practice had given rise greater shared understanding of seeds of a powerful idea that His Majesty unleashed. Our youngest monarch was so clear long ago that happiness is the ultimate common end and everything else was means or instruments for fulfilling this wish that every human being has. Yet it is ironic that we are pervasively susceptible to confusing between ends and means, although it is a constant theme in Buddhist social and economic thought.

GNH stresses collective happiness to be addressed directly through public policies in which happiness becomes an explicit criterion in projects and programmes. The society as a whole cannot obtain happiness if individuals compete for it at all cost irresponsibly in a zero-sum game. Gross National Happiness (GNH) measures the quality of a country in more holistic way and believes that the beneficial development of human society takes place when material and spiritual development occurs side-by-side to complement and reinforce each other (Ura, 2012).

For instance, GNH counts the importance of material security as one of these – and assessing whether people enjoy sufficient and equitable living standards, is included in the GNH survey. Similarly, the happiness of human beings is not seen as separate from the well-being of other life forms, and ecological diversity and resilience are included in the measure of GNH. The balance between material and non-material development, and the multi-dimensional and interdependent nature of GNH are key features that distinguish GNH from GDP as a measure of a country's progress.

2. Human Values

The 21st century had been the century reshaped by humankind that had almost destroyed all the ecosystem. The constant revolution in the field of science and technology, medicine and others although had brought changes in the nature but the capitalist principles and mercantilism had come at the cost of sacrifice made by our mother earth. The technology had leveled the influx use of natural resources but not the greed of human beings. In rest of the world, Bhutanese perhaps witness many political turmoil and upheavals, economic crisis and advent of natural disasters which for the Bhutanese is most terrible and shocking news as it had never occurred in Bhutan. This mainly deals with the Human Values concept which is now taking a toll in almost all the education institutes and offices.

As compassionate leadership is concern, the monarchs in Bhutan envisioned the declining humanity in this much materialized world and too much dilution of one's own identity. As compassionate leadership is related with farsightedness, monarchs in Bhutan introduced human values as part of curriculum in Bhutan education institutions which is proactive till now that aims to infuse oneself with values of life. As compassionate leaders, the monarchs are true devotees of one's own religion and by large our monarchs are hugely religious minded which deepens the concept of Karma (Cause and Effect).

The Human values in Bhutan is flourishing and gaining popularity among the educational institution both in and out due to its value of minimizing the greed and ensuring happy living with community, society and nature. The human value is inclusive of sharing a friendly environment with nature and humans that helped Bhutan to preserve some of the endangered plant and animal species in the world. Today, Bhutan is drafted as one of the richest biological hotspot in the world that ensures continued maintenance of minimum of 60% of land under forest cover which is embedded in the Constitution of Bhutan. This is directly related to religiousness of the monarch which is one of the traits of compassionate leadership's style.

3. Democratization

The democracy was new to Bhutanese when the entire world transitioned to that political system. Bhutanese never demanded the democracy nor fought for that form of government. It was introduced in an unprecedented manner and pioneered by our monarch to relate to other nations. In 2006, his majesty the fourth

king, made a voluntary abdication of throne and commanded on institution of democracy in Bhutan with preparation of the constitution of Bhutan and orienting to the entire district.

The compassionate leadership as defined by Bhutanese “Choe Gi Gyalpo” is characterized by compassion and farsightedness which endure all the issues and cater it with all diligence. The fourth monarch of Bhutanese knew that, it is the right time to transit from monarchy to democracy when its subjects are ready. Before introducing the democracy, the fourth king already prepared Bhutanese by delegating the powers to district and blocks in 1981 and 1991 respectively. Before democracy, Bhutan had conducted mock elections upon the command of fourth king and accordingly Bhutanese are prepared and in many institutions like educations, all the positions are selected through a vote. This compassionate leadership style is related with features of leader like being farsighted and visionary.

4. Conclusion

The main objective of this research is to aligning the leadership styles used by monarchs in Bhutan and how this had given rise to very unique legacies which are of great importance in this present materialized world. The monarchs are regarded as god in human form in Buddhist teachings and also it is the ultimate resort to all the people in Bhutan. That is the reason why monarchs are kept at very high esteem by Bhutanese and never confronts with their visionary roles, policies they amend and other programmes which are deemed to be of utilitarianism approach that is concerned at looking into the matter of masses rather than of individual interest.

The leadership styles as depicted unfolds the typical leadership style in Bhutan known as Compassionate leadership styles that blends the essence of both transformational and charismatic leadership styles. Data pertaining to how subject preserve their leaders and leadership perception on their fellow countrymen are taken into consideration and many traits are taken into consideration for coining the leadership styles and accordingly, various legacies were identified and very unique legacies were taken into considerations for analysis and interpretation.

The compassionate leadership styles was notable from perceptions given by the participants which is the blend of both the charismatic and transformational leadership styles but limited to what Bhutan call “ Choe Gi Gyalpo” meaning Dharma King. The monarchs in Bhutan are regarded as great manifestation of gods by which Bhutanese keep their king at very high esteem and they are too the source of worship for Bhutanese. In order to qualify what is coined as a compassionate leader, various traits of leaders were coined from Bhutanese perceptions on their monarch. Lastly the data had a larger influence on traits like being visionary, farsightedness, tirelessness, selflessness and very religious. These traits were taken into consideration for validating the compassionate leadership styles used by monarch in Bhutan.

Now once the leadership styles were found out, the objective of the research was discovering very unique legacies from the use of compassionate leadership style by Bhutanese monarchs and accordingly among various legacies, very unique and not existence at international levels was identified for drawing conclusions and relating it with the leadership styles.

The very unique legacies which is nonexistence in the world but which serves purposes in safeguarding the planet is taken out for further discussion. The first and foremost legacies which is unbeaten was the development of holistic approach of development which is famously known as Gross National Happiness.

Gross National Happiness which is a developmental philosophy was the brainchild of our great fourth, his majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuck who famously said that for Bhutan Happiness is of extreme importance than the materialistic philosophy of development based on Gross Domestic Products. The GDP is very ambitious in its attainment that takes toll of destruction to environment while Gross National Happiness reinforces the neutrality from destruction thereby balancing the ecosystem. This indicates that most of leaders in different nations whose leadership styles might lie in the framework of either transformational or charismatic leadership styles but not the compassionate leadership style otherwise, the very basic and purpose of development would had been developed in the world earlier than Bhutan.

In order to support a broader concept known as Gross National Happiness (GNH), there is a requirement of pillars which is of four types such as good governance, sustainable socio economic development, preservation and promotion of culture and environmental conservation.

These 9 domains, clearly demonstrate that from the perspective of GNH, many inter-related factors are important in creating the conditions for happiness. For example, GNH counts the importance of material security as one of these – and assessing whether people enjoy sufficient and equitable living standards, is included in the GNH survey. Similarly, the happiness of human beings is not seen as separate from the well-being of other life forms, and ecological diversity and resilience are included in the measure of GNH. The balance between material and non-material development, and the multi-dimensional and interdependent nature of GNH are key features that distinguish GNH from GDP as a measure of a country's progress. In accordance with these 9 domains, Bhutan has developed 38 sub-indexes, 72 indicators and 151 variables that are used to define and analyze the happiness of the Bhutanese people (Center, 2012).

Nature is very crucial for the existence of all the living beings. The present generations had seen influx of downturns in nature which included the extinction of some species of plants and animals and others on verge of extinctions if not taken proper cautious measures. Bhutan as blessed from very unique leadership styles had emulated the very interdependency of all living beings and heightened the enormous strategy in protecting nature. Today, Bhutan has more than 74% of land under forest cover. More than half of the country is designated either as wildlife sanctuaries and biological corridors. Pollution from all sides are well taken care by the Bhutanese government through the concept of greener policies.

Bhutan enjoys a very green source of energy which is of renewable in nature and caters its population with 100% organic produce. As a result, Bhutan enjoys healthy food and celebrate environmental day nationwide to mark the birth anniversary of our late third king who is credited for establishing the modern education system in Bhutan.

The education system which had emerged very actively in Bhutan is free of cost. Bhutan caters its entire people with free education not limited to pre-primary but till the university education too. As they graduate, if the students are not employed or enrolled in any of the organizations, the government takes precautions in training those unemployed into a specific job hereby making them capable into the job market. The present literacy in Bhutan had enormously risen to 54% that is important for the significance of human resource index which is important for the development of country.

The health is of great importance in today's world with the outbreak of many of the deadliest diseases, the health which is inclusive of both basic and advanced health care are given free of cost by state which is the mainstream legacies that had given rise due to use of compassionate leadership styles by our great monarchs. The state prioritizes in the advanced facilities and training of its medical expertise that had resulted into very healthy human resources in Bhutan. Today, the life expectancy of Bhutan had drastically increased to 66 and there is significant reduction in child mother fatality rate.

Human values which is instituted in many of the education sectors that has the essence of imbibing values in our daily lives. Human values is in large control of one's own greed, helps develop positive impact on all living beings and train us to dwell in a shared environment with shared responsibilities. Now human values which are vibrant takes many folds and scopes had widen so much that all the ministries in Bhutan are compulsory to attend certification course on human values while it is an ongoing curriculum in educational institutions.

The final legacy from the use of compassionate leadership styles used by Bhutan is a smooth and swift transition from monarchy to democracy. Bhutanese never wanted democracy nor did we fight for it, Bhutanese have enjoyed monarchies from the beginning of its establishment till date and without any hindrance from early 1907 when monarchy was first established till date, the Wangchuck dynasty had ruled for a century. Now our monarchs are the one that introduced democracy in Bhutan against the wills and whims of its subjects.

Although, the democracy in Bhutan is just less than decade old, it is vibrant and fully institutionalized and functions like a well-established democracy in the world.

This study just examined the relationship of leadership styles and its resultant legacies in Bhutan as typically from the monarchs in Bhutan and limited to others, the perception of leadership and legacies are based on Bhutanese and that excludes foreigners on the view of monarchs in Bhutan. There are ample scopes for further studies and research especially on examining the correlation between leaderships styles and its outcome, traits and legacies, and finally degree of usage of which leadership styles appropriate for its fellow countrymen.

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