



# INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

*An initiative of  
the National Academy of Public Administration,  
and the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs  
and the Bobst Center for Peace and Justice,  
Princeton University*

Oral History Program

Series:

Governance Traps

Interview no.:

L2

Interviewee: Thinley Gyamtsho

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Date of Interview: 18 November 2009

Location: Thimphu  
Bhutan

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MUKHERJEE: It is the 18<sup>th</sup> of November, 2009; I am with Lyonpo Thinley Gyamtsho, the Chairman of the Royal Civil Service Commission. Sir, could I start by asking you to provide a brief background of yourself and your involvement in civil service reform in Bhutan?

GYAMTSHO: *I am Lyonpo Thinley Gyamtsho and right now I am the Chairman of the Royal Civil Service Commission. I was appointed as the chairman earlier this year. I and my four colleagues, the new commission of the Royal Civil Service Commission, have been in office barely ten months or so. But before that, I'd been in the public service over 34 years. I worked in several ministries and departments. My last two portfolios were firstly—the last was the Minister for Education and before that I was the Minister responsible for Home and Cultural Affairs. So in each of these portfolios I was there for five years each.*

*The Royal Civil Service Commission is not really new to me, although I've been in the present post less than a year. Earlier, for two and a half years, I was the secretary of the commission. Then later on, the six ministers of the Royal Government used to take turns as the chairman of the Royal Civil Service Commission. So I was the chairman twice and each tenure was about half a year.*

MUKHERJEE: When you mentioned that you were in the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs, was this between 1998 and 2008 in the two cabinets?

GYAMTSHO: *Yes, I was the Minister for Home and Cultural Affairs my first term from 1998 until 2003 and then the Minister for Education from 2003 until 2008 until I resigned. Then there was this first general election in the country.*

MUKHERJEE: You mentioned that you were previously the Secretary of the Royal Civil Service Commission. Which year was that in?

GYAMTSHO: *I think that was 1995 to '97.*

MUKHERJEE: And subsequently your two terms as Chairman of the Commission were again between '98 and 2008?

GYAMTSHO: *During that five-year period from 1998 to 2003, the Royal Civil Service Commission used to consist of all the Cabinet ministers. The day-to-day running of the Commission was done by the Secretary of the Commission, but from 2003 onwards until 2008 when the ministers withdrew, the secretaries of the government became the members of the Commission.*

*Now this is the third change where we neither have the ministers nor the secretaries of the government, rather we have now a five-member, full time commissioners.*

MUKHERJEE: This seems to be part of a broader evolution of the Civil Service Commission. Could you talk about the history of the RCSC going back a little bit as to how it has evolved as an organization?

GYAMTSHO: *Well, you know the modern Bhutan started in 1960. The first schools, the first kilometer of roads, the first hospitals were started between 1959 onwards. Before that, Bhutan was closed to the outside world. There was no modernization. So the Royal Civil Service Commission came as one of those processes. In fact, it started off as a department called the Manpower Department.*

*1982 was the time the Royal Civil Service Commission was established. It was established through a royal charter issued by His Majesty the King. Since then, the Royal Civil Service Commission is not a part of any other ministry, but enjoys the powers and mandate of a*

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*ministry, is a separate organization where the commissioners were the ministers and the Chief Executive Officer was the Commission's Secretary.*

*This system carried on from 1982 until 2003. As I said, I was one of the ministers for the last Commission where the Commission members were ministers. In 2003, the secretaries to the government became the commissioners.*

MUKHERJEE: What was the motivation for the shift in 2003 from having ministers as members to secretaries of government?

GYAMTSO: *A gradual reform and also decentralization downward. Earlier, the ministers were seen as the head of the ministry and also the ministers used to plan through the bureaucracy. As in my case, a secretary would get promoted as a minister. So in 2003, the decision was taken that the ministers should not have anything to do with the civil servants, rather it should be the top bureaucrats in a ministry and the top bureaucrats were the secretaries to the government. So the secretaries became the commissioners.*

MUKHERJEE: Was that a deliberate attempt to remove any political influence on the civil service? In the background research that we've done it seems that there was a resolution passed by the National Assembly to depoliticize the civil service. Was this the main outcome of that resolution?

GYAMTSO: *I think there were many, many reasons. One was decentralization. I think earlier under the monarchy system the ministers were all powerful. Not only was the head of the ministry responsible for formulation of plans and policies, but also he was the ultimate authority who was responsible for implementation and over all the civil servants under his respective Ministry. So the thinking was that now the ministers should concentrate on policy and planning. Implementation should be with the secretaries, since the civil servants are the ones who implement policies and plans. So that was one reason.*

*The second reason was that we wanted to establish a common, unified civil service through the system. So the thinking was, which the parliament endorsed eventually, that there should be one common civil service serving all three branches of the government, not only the executive but also the legislative and judicial. Along with the secretaries to the government, the secretary of the National Assembly, at that time we used to have only one house, as well as the register general of the judiciary. They also joined in as members of the Royal Civil Service Commission.*

MUKHERJEE: You mentioned that there was another change after that, after 2003. The next change came with the new constitution for the civil service?

GYAMTSO: *Well, the next change is the present change. Firstly, there was the first general election based on adult franchise in 2008. Following that, the constitution was adopted. Then, the Constitution's Article 26 made the Royal Civil Service Commission a constitutional body, one of the four constitutional bodies, along with the Royal Audit Authority, the Election Commission and the Anti-Corruption Commission, that are independent and apolitical.*

*So based on that, the present Commission was appointed in January this year. This was the last change. I suppose now the structure and the formalization of the Royal Civil Service Commission as the central personnel agency of the government, as well as an independent and apolitical constitutional body, is almost complete.*

MUKHERJEE: How are the members of the RCSC now appointed to the Commission? Who appoints them to the position?

GYAMTSO: *Again, the constitution, Article 26, the procedure is clearly laid out. The candidates have to be nominated and agreed to by five eminent people, the prime minister, the leader of the*

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*opposition, the chief justice, the speaker of the National Assembly and the chairman of the National Council. These five people would have to agree on the candidates and then what they have agreed is submitted to His Majesty the King and His Majesty the King appoints the five members.*

MUKHERJEE: Who suggests the candidatures of the individuals who are then approved by the five individuals?

GYAMTSHO: *I think probably they would have to identify amongst themselves and agree. I think the process starts with them and it ends with them submitting the list to His Majesty the King.*

MUKHERJEE: What are the roles and responsibilities today of the RCSC?

GYAMTSHO: *The roles of the Royal Civil Service Commission, if you compare it with systems in other parts of the world, particularly India, has the functions of three agencies. Firstly, it carries out the same mandate of the Union Public Service Commission in India, when it comes to selections and other HR actions of the officers, cadres and others.*

*Of course, here we don't have a state service commission, There is only one commission. Then it carries out the same functions of the Ministry of Personnel and Grievances in India, and a lot of functions of the individual ministries also. The constitution says the RCSC is the central personnel agency of the government. That means anything to do with the civil service in the country, the RCSC is the ultimate authority. In fact, if I may dwell a little bit on the apolitical, independent part. Here when we say apolitical and independent, it is a bit more than what is in the other countries. In fact, the cabinet and the prime minister have very little to do when it comes to civil service matters. The Royal Civil Service Commission is the ultimate authority on all civil service matters.*

MUKHERJEE: What about the budget of the Commission? Is that provided by the government?

GYAMTSHO: *Yes. When it comes to budget, which is not much, that's the third function. We are responsible for all the training programs of the civil servants. Now when it comes to budget, budget both for salary of the Commission as well as the budget required for training the civil servants, it is all from the Ministry of Finance. That way it is very much like any other government agency. We have to go through the budgetary process. The Finance Ministry, compiles the budget and then it is submitted to the parliament once a year and accrued from there.*

MUKHERJEE: Sir, I'd like to talk a little bit about civil service reform itself in Bhutan. We've talked about the RCSC. Now how has civil service reform taken place in Bhutan historically speaking? What have been the various milestones, as it were, of civil service reform going back in time?

GYAMTSHO: *Well it starts from 1982, when the Civil Service Commission was established. Earlier, individual ministries probably would carry out the functions of what is now carried out by the RCSC. So from 1982 onward, it has been a gradual process, just like any development process in the country. It has been a gradual process all the way. For example, we had, what you call the Good Governance Exercise, where we tried to streamline and reform to try to make civil service better.*

*Four years later, in 2003, again we had what we call the Good Governance Plus, GG Plus exercise. Then around the same time we introduced a position classification system (PCS) that I'll go into later, while at the same time, we had an organizational development exercise. Of course, the Constitution in 2008, made the civil service totally independent and apolitical. Now we have the present Commission.*

GYAMTSHO: *On Friday at the parliament, the two houses, will have one of the most important items on the agenda, the Civil Service Bill 2009. The Civil Service Bill Act is going to reform or bring the civil*

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*service in line with all the happenings that have been taking place after the adoption of the constitution.*

*The Position Classification System was introduced by the earlier Commission. It is not very different from the kind of system in place in other countries, but when we introduce any new reform, of course, there is a lot of controversy both for and against. So the controversy is still going on. But then I think for good of the civil servants as well as for the country, the dust that was raised by the PCS has now settled.*

*One of the first assignments of the present Civil Service Commission is to review the PCS, Position Classification System. We set up a committee consisting of three of the five commissioners that we have and then we added all our division chiefs. They consult with most of the ministries and the agencies. From the PCS, then, we will decide which regulations are best and which we think are relevant. Now we will have three kinds of legal documents.*

*One is Article 26 of the Constitution. The other is the Civil Service Bill Act, when it is passed. Then the Commission itself comes out with the Bhutan Civil Service Rules and Regulations that goes into the details. The last edition came out in 2006, so the Commission is revising the BCSR, the Bhutan Civil Service Rules and Regulations of 2006. We want to bring it out sometime in 2010. The new Bhutan Civil Service Rules and Regulations would be in line with the Constitution and if the bill is passed, in line with the bill.*

*When it comes to the Position Classification System, we have already chosen most of the salient features of the PCS that we will include in different chapters of the BCSR. It will not be called the PCS, but rather, the good things in the PCS will be part of the BCSR 2010.*

MUKHERJEE: What was the initial motivation, what was the challenge that the Civil Service Commission was trying to address through the PCS?

GYAMTSHO: *Well, it was the earlier Commission, so probably I'm not the authority to speak on it. It was a reform process, so that the guiding principle of a small compact government is to put in line, a civil service promotion is based on merit and to streamline the various features of the earlier cadre system. So it was one effort to reform the civil service and it did help a lot.*

MUKHERJEE: And what specific steps did the Position Classification System entail in terms of implementation? How did the Commission go about implementing the system?

GYAMTSHO: *Let me give one example. For example, our selection of director of a department. Earlier, the ministries would recommend a candidate or a list of candidates and then the RCC would agree or in case they had reservations, they would ask for some more names.*

*Under the PCS, as in other parts of the world, the position is advertised through the media and the candidates have to apply. If the application is for a position at a lower level, the Human Resource Committee at the ministry makes the selection. If the application is at the senior level, the entire Civil Service Commission sits and decides. We go through the applications and then we interview the candidates and then the candidates are selected and announced based on merit. So those were the kinds of changes.*

MUKHERJEE: When you publicly advertise it, are the only people that are eligible people who are already in the civil service? You don't recruit from outside?

GYAMTSHO: *Mostly yes. We do have a "criteria set" on each advertisement. In case of directors of departments it will be amongst civil servants. In some cases where it's not for a high level position, the RCC or other agencies will have to advertise and it probably will be open to all candidates.*



- MUKHERJEE: Going back a little bit to 1999 when you were part of the Civil Service Commission, you mentioned the first Good Governance exercise. What were the challenges that you perceived and how did the Good Governance exercise address those challenges?
- GYAMTSHO: *I will not be able to give you the details, but I would say, what we do here in Bhutan is not because there is a need for it, we always plan ahead. For example, in the adoption of the constitution, the election based on parties, in fact there was no demand for it from any quarter. Rather, it was first a move initiated from the throne and secondly, forward planning.*
- So all these exercises, like our development of the political system, even the civil service, it was always trying to improve the system from what is good to better rather than in other countries when there is a need for it. So there are all these exercises like the PCS or the GG exercise, or the GG Plus, all these things are advance planning. For example, the Civil Service Bill that will be discussed next week in the parliament, we already have our Royal Charter that is more than adequate and we have been functioning well with it. Based on the royal charter, we have this very thick Bhutan Civil Service Rules and Regulations covering all kinds of details.*
- But now, we feel that the civil service has to be brought in line with the Constitution, and that is why the bill is at the parliament for consideration.*
- MUKHERJEE: So was the Good Governance exercise and all the other subsequent exercises a part of the broader reform exercise that was being carried out by His Majesty?
- GYAMTSHO: *A lot of the initiative was from His Majesty, but the Commission itself has had this kind of plan.*
- MUKHERJEE: Was it considered important in '99 to reform the civil service in some way through these initiatives, to make it ready for the reforms that were to come in terms of the Constitution, the elections, and a new system of government? Was it considered important to reform the service for that reason?
- GYAMTSHO: *Well, let's say Good Governance and Good Governance Plus, the two documents, were not about the civil service alone; it covered a whole spectrum of governance in the country. Of course, civil service was a very important factor there. I think the reforms from 2003 onward, making a common civil service for all the three branches of the government was a kind of preparation for what was going to happen after the constitution. In many ways it was a kind of trial of how things would work under the constitution. So, it was, again, a way of forward planning.*
- MUKHERJEE: And where did the initiative come from for the 2003 changes?
- GYAMTSHO: *I think it was from the government, consisting of the ministers that we used to have. The cabinet started this and then I think the Royal Civil Service Commission and its secretariat had to spearhead the whole process.*
- MUKHERJEE: As a member of the cabinet at the time, were you involved in the discussions that led up to these reforms? What kinds of options did you consider when you arrived at the conclusion that a set of reforms were necessary? So could you talk a little bit about the discussions that you had with your colleagues and the various options that you may have considered, that led up to this final decision?
- GYAMTSHO: *I won't be able to remember all the details because I was just one of the members. I don't think it was options. There were a series of activities, over 250 to be done. Each of these activities were discussed in detail. Those which we found were either not necessary or not possible at this stage were discarded. The ones which we felt could be done and should be done were listed. That was in 1999.*

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*So in 2003 when we had the second phase that we called the GG Plus, we revisited what was done earlier and then again what was remaining. As I said a set of activities were listed and I think most of the activities were completed.*

MUKHERJEE: And the initial list of 200 plus activities how was that developed? Who was in charge of actually coming up with those priorities?

GYAMTSHO: *Probably a number of agencies including the Royal Civil Service Commission, the Planning Commission Secretariat, now called GNH (Gross National Happiness) Commission Secretariat, as well as our secretaries in the different ministries. I think they were all responsible for drawing up the list they sent to the Council of Ministers.*

MUKHERJEE: So these priorities were all then reflected in the Good Governance document that came out in 1998? You talked a little bit about the controversies over the position classification system. Could you elaborate a little bit on the arguments that were used against it and for it? What was the debate exactly? What generated this controversy?

GYAMTSHO: *Any reform normally there will be people for and against. So the ones that were against, were opposed to one of the salient features of the PCS, the qualification standards along with general merit. In the earlier system, for example, promotion within the civil service was based on seniority cum merit. Under the Position Classification, qualification became more important. This was at the same time when any candidate who was going to stand for election to the parliament had to have a university degree. So similarly in the civil service system the minimum qualification required for the officers' cadre was a degree, a university degree.*

*People who were not getting a promotion or training, those who had probably fewer qualifications and who were very senior, once they found out that there would not be a further promotion, got upset and were not very happy.*

MUKHERJEE: How was this objection raised? Was there a public debate in the National Assembly or how did these concerns come up.

GYAMTSHO: *Through the media a lot, and then also we had conferences. When I was the education minister, we used to have annual education conference with educators and teachers from all over the country. Agriculture would have something similar, Health would have something similar. So during these conferences, people who were both for and against would raise their voices. Debate was reported in the newspapers and now the internet is the thing and you'll find that there is a lot of discussion on the PCS about whether people with master's degrees should be given automatic placement to a five rating and things like that.*

MUKHERJEE: Did you as a member of the cabinet and your colleagues in general try to address these concerns?

GYAMTSHO: *Yes, I think both the Civil Service Commission as well as at the ministry level and even at the cabinet level this was discussed. Adjustments were made within the original PCS system on some of the issues. I'm not sure whether it was raised in the parliament or not, but then issues like PCS are very technical and normally they go by the wisdom of the Royal Civil Service Commission.*

MUKHERJEE: For example, on the issue of qualifications, did the Civil Service Commission have to modify the system to address the concerns of people who were senior but lacked the qualifications?

GYAMTSHO: *Not on the qualification for selection to the officers' cadre, but the Civil Service Commission made some consideration for them to get additional qualifications. Some of the restrictions for admission into our colleges and for training abroad were relaxed so that candidates would have an opportunity to qualify to be selected. That's just one example.*

MUKHERJEE: In a lot of merit-based systems in other countries, there are formal requirements for promotion or recruitment etcetera, but what actually happens is different because of the realities of the system. Because of needs of efficiency sometimes people don't follow the guidelines to the letter. Has that been a problem in Bhutan? Is there a gap between the formal requirements and the actual practices of the merit-based system?

GYAMTSHO: *Well, yes and no, particularly in our small system where you know everybody, it can be a problem. Then probably a lot is based on the personal relationship. It is a problem. For promotion purpose, for example, we need three years evaluation. Many of these people I wish would do a better job when it comes to evaluation. But within the system we try our best. There are weaknesses and we try to improve. I mean, every time we come out with new Bhutan Civil Service Rules and Regulations, this is something we try to address.*

MUKHERJEE: This must complicate the issue of performance management when you have to do evaluations and everybody knows everybody else. What are the particular challenges in a place like Bhutan of doing performance evaluation and using that as a metric for promotions or other incentives?

GYAMTSHO: *In a small system where a lot is based on personal relationship it is very difficult to be professional and then also maintaining confidentiality is very difficult. When it comes to promotion we have to use the evaluation we are getting and then also our experiences, our knowledge about people, particularly if we have to select at the higher level, at the senior positions.*

MUKHERJEE: So to some extent do you rely on the individual judgment as well of the commissioners?

GYAMTSHO: *Yes, not only at the commissioner level, but at the lower level, too, because at the apex level there is the Royal Civil Service Commission but in each ministry and in each agency, we have bodies called Human Resource Committees, which are chaired by the secretaries of the respective ministries and include all the heads of departments. They do similar evaluations and similar discussion at their level before sending the case to the Royal Civil Service Commission. So to a certain extent, cases that come to the office are filtered and that makes it easier.*

MUKHERJEE: Within government agencies and ministries, how often does the performance evaluation take place and who does it?

GYAMTSHO: *It is done on six-month basis. For promotion purposes, they have to send a three-year performance evaluation. Normally it is done by the reporting officer. There is a reviewing officer and then there is the final authority who endorses. So it depends who you are. Your immediate supervisor is the reporting officer, the next highest one will be reviewing, and the final authority is the secretary of the ministry. If it is a department head, then the secretary is the reviewing officer. So it just depends at what level of office, what grade he is.*

MUKHERJEE: And the final decision for that promotion is made by the Civil Service Commission?

GYAMTSHO: *For the officers' cadre which is P5 and above. Anything lower is by the ministry's sponsor responsibility. But in case it involves out-of-turn promotion, premature promotion, then it has to come to the Royal Civil Service Commission.*

MUKHERJEE: We've talked a little bit about the obstacles of implementing a merit-based system as you mentioned. One of the issues in a lot of other parts of the world is of political appointments. At the senior levels some of the appointments are political and when you try to implement a merit-based system these two practices can conflict. To what extent are appointments in the Bhutan civil service made politically?



- GYAMTSHO: *Well I could not have commented earlier since the Royal Civil Service Commission is not supposed to have any politics, is apolitical. Since the adoption of the Constitution, there is no such thing as political appointment of civil servants. There is none. For even a secretary to the government, the highest bureaucrat, or a governor of a district the list of candidates is drawn up by the Civil Service Commission and then it goes to the Prime Minister and the final approval is given by His Majesty. This is in our constitution. For everybody else, it is either the Royal Civil Service Commission or the ministries, the decisions are taken by the HR committees.*
- MUKHERJEE: You mentioned also that something like a position classification system is quite technical. In implementing that kind of system did you find that the capacity of officers or civil servants in the system who needed to work with that system was not high enough to grasp the technicalities and to implement that system?
- GYAMTSHO: *Three or four years after the implementation of the position classification system, I don't think this is a problem. I think what the Royal Civil Service Commission did was to make a lot of effort to train people dealing with personnel issues, the HR officers in each of the ministries. I find that the present HR officers in all the ministries are quite capable of implementing both, all the issues involved with the position classification system as well as the other issues pertinent to their own civil servants.*
- MUKHERJEE: So I'd like to move on to the topic of training. You mentioned that the RCSC is the body that provides training for civil servants. Could you talk a little bit about the different types of training that you offer and where they are conducted and who conducts them?
- GYAMTSHO: *Here in our education system we follow this bilingual system, Bhutanese language as well as the English language. So from the first day a child is in school they have to learn both languages. This system goes all the way to the university level. So First, our civil servants train in the country, like the officers cadre, they are trained at the Royal Institute of Management. Then the different ministries have their own training programs, for example, the teachers. There are two teacher training colleges.*
- A lot of basic training is conducted within the country. But once a person has joined the civil service, then we send a large number of them, including civil servants, for training abroad. We take advantage of our civil servants' knowledge of English. So many civil servants are trained all over the world particular in English-speaking countries. In India we send quite a lot; in fact, the Indian Administrative College we use quite a lot.*
- To us, being a small country, what is important is our strength lies in knowing about the outside world. Through this window of English language, our best students, including civil servants, are being trained and educated in some of the best colleges and universities in the world. When they come back, they bring with them new knowledge and new technology. Because of our smallness, we cannot do enough research and development in Bhutan so the civil service, as well as the other systems in the country, give a lot of importance to further training and human resource development in institutes in other countries.*
- MUKHERJEE: Was training considered to be a major objective in the reforms that were launched around 1999 with the Good Governance?
- GYAMTSHO: *Yes, very much. PSC gives a lot of importance on training and furthering qualifications.*
- MUKHERJEE: And at that time were there any efforts to identify the current gaps that existed in the capacity of civil servants in the system and then to fill those gaps in a targeted manner or was it just a broad commitment?

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GYAMTSHO: *Broad as well as very, very specific. The shortage of teachers, particularly teachers responsible for teaching science and math subjects, medical doctors, engineers, architects, in the ministries are examples of some of our gaps.*

MUKHERJEE: Were there specific programs targeted at training civil servants on the merits of the PCS, the merit-based system, information technology? Were there specific modules that were created for these kinds of training?

GYAMTSHO: *Here in Bhutan what we follow is the five-year plan. For five years we determine the number of training slots, the levels, also the field. So all the training programs which we call, the Human Resource Master Plan, are conducted as per the five-year program. In the five-year plan, particularly on human resource development, there is a lot of emphasis on the areas where we have shortages, the teachers, the doctors, the engineers and architects.*

MUKHERJEE: And the funding for the training came entirely from the government?

GYAMTSHO: *We use all the sources. I think in the Royal Government promised budget, a large chunk is devoted to training and then our donors, the U.N., through the bilateral system. In fact, quite a lot of resources for training are from the donors. If the government of Australia is sponsoring some scholarships, then the students go to Australia and everything will be paid. The selection is based on merit. For any long-term training, the slots are there in the five-year plan divided sector-wise, these are all advertised and selections are based on merit. Also if you are civil servant you need to have at least a two-year gap before you can qualify for the next training.*

MUKHERJEE: How is the selection for these training processes done? Who decides which officers will go for training or is it that everyone must go for training?

GYAMTSHO: *First of all the teachers, then the slots for each ministry laid down in the five-year plan. So based on that, if it is national level training sponsored by the Royal Civil Service Commission, it is openly advertised to all. If it is for the Ministry of Education, then these are meant for teachers with at minimum, a B.A. degree. Again the advertisement will be amongst teachers. So normally it is based on a transparent competitive system.*

MUKHERJEE: In other parts of the world, often with civil servants trained by the government, there is a risk that they'll go to other jobs because they develop skills and they leave for the private sector or they leave for international agencies or even those who are sent abroad tend to try and stay on abroad. Has this been a challenge for the Bhutanese government?

GYAMTSHO: *I don't know whether you'll believe this or not: Somehow the Bhutanese like to come back. In fact, I was in New Zealand for six and a half years. I never thought about staying there and trying to get New Zealand citizenship. It never occurred to me. I just wanted to come back. This is the case with all the Bhutanese. Among the tens and thousands of students we have sent out since development started in the '60s or '70s, less than a dozen have been lost through the brain drain to other countries. Otherwise, everybody else came back.*

*When our civil servants begin training, if they are selected by the RCSC, they have to sign an agreement with us and the agreement will say that they will have to work in the job they're on or in the job specified by the government, twice the duration of the training. So if the training is for two years, they have to work a minimum four years. After four years they can go and work for others, failing that, they have to pay sometimes as much as twice the amount the government spent on them, including the funding by our donors.*

*So that way we've been able to control the brain drain to other countries as well as the loss of trained people to other professions, particularly doctors and teachers. Once they are trained, they can't leave immediately.*

- MUKHERJEE: Did you mention this policy is part of the Civil Service Rules and Guidelines?
- GYAMTSO: *It is very much there. It has been there for many years and when this Commission took over at end of March, we improved on it. In fact, when the new Bhutan Civil Service Rules and Regulations (BCSR) is drawn up next year, we will improve even further.*
- MUKHERJEE: Just to talk a little bit about performance again. Does the Civil Service Commission take any steps to implement incentives among the civil servants to improve performance? Are there any incentive systems that you put in place as the Civil Service Commission or is it done more at the ministerial level?
- GYAMTSO: *Both at the Civil Service Commission as well as at the Ministry level, incentives are built into the system. Your promotion is based on your performance. Your selection for training abroad is based on performance and when these posts are advertised to the people, these individuals are interviewed to decide who should go. A lot of the questions will be relating to their performance and what they have done both as a member of the team and individually. So performance is very important in the civil service system and incentives are built in.*
- MUKHERJEE: And in the new period of reforms from 1999, did the Civil Service Commission have to take any steps to change the attitudes of civil servants who had been used to a different system. As you said, in '99 they were brought together as one unified civil service for the three branches of government. Previously that was not the case. So were any steps taken to change their attitudes and get them used to the new system?
- GYAMTSO: *This kind of system is always continuous. You're going back to 1999. The present system had the challenge of making the civil servants work under a democratic system. That's why the bill is placed at the parliament.*
- MUKHERJEE: So in addition to that objective of making them work under a democratic system, what are the specific goals that you envisage for the civil service going forward?
- GYAMTSO: *Our ratio of civil servants to population is probably quite high by world standards. I think we have almost 22,000 civil servants to a population of just over half a million, so we don't want our bureaucracy to grow too much. So that way the quality of civil servants, productivity, a bulging bureaucracy is something we don't want to see.*
- MUKHERJEE: On the issue of technology, this is something that has also been an objective of the Civil Service Commission, how has that helped you in pushing forward the reform agenda of the civil service?
- GYAMTSO: *Well technology is very important. Keeping in mind the small, compact, and efficient government, I think with technology, a fewer number of people can do more work. So we're giving a lot of importance to educating the people in technology. In fact, computer knowledge has become very, very important. Here in the Commission itself, of the four divisions we have, one is on the information and technology system. We are also getting a lot of help from the Ministry of Communication, particularly the Department of Information and Technology. We work very closely with them. Technology is even newer to Bhutan than television, which was started only in 1999. Things like the Internet came even later. So for the civil servants to serve the people, to deliver services and work faster, it is very, very important that all the training programs within the country have a good package for learning about IT and other technologies.*
- MUKHERJEE: So has there been an attempt to automate processes through computers? Things that were previously done on paper or through files, are they now done through computers?
- GYAMTSO: *Yes, in fact a lot, particularly during the last five years. I think there has been a lot of progress made in the use of computer and technology.*

- MUKHERJEE: And has this also been part of the effort to improve, to create good governance over all?
- GYAMTSHO: *Yes, you'll see that both the Good Governance and the Good Governance Plus document gives a lot of importance in order to reduce red tape. The bureaucracy puts a lot of emphasis on the use of technology.*
- MUKHERJEE: I think that covers pretty much everything that we have. Is there anything you'd like to add? As I said in the beginning, we are doing this as an exercise to help leaders and public officials in other parts of the world who are dealing with similar issues of reforming the civil service and bringing it in line with the priorities of the government. Is there is anything that you feel that I missed in our conversation?
- GYAMTSHO: *I don't think you have missed anything, but what I would like to add here is under the democratic system we are servants, civil servants. Normally we don't like to have many milestones and we try to be quite shy of the publicity also. We don't like to project ourselves as a high profile powerful agency. We like to keep a low profile, serving the political master, serving the people. So this is something we have to keep in mind.*
- Having said that, you'll see that if you trace the development of the Civil Service Commission and the civil servants, over the past four decades there is a gradual improvement, there are gradual changes. You'll not see any noticeable landmarks as such. There is no "great leap forward". It's a gradual evolution except perhaps in 2008 which has many milestones, in particular the adoption of the Constitution and general elections based on party politics and their impacts on the Civil Service.*
- In fact, we don't say that we are always the "champion of reform" kind of thing. We carry on the duties that we have to do right now, between the Constitution and between this act when it is passed. Whether you call it deliberate reform or reform forced on us, our challenge will be keeping up with what is required of us through the Constitution, through political changes and through this bill when it is passed. So you will see that this is nothing very dramatic. That is why we don't feature ourselves as the leaders of reform.*
- MUKHERJEE: As I mentioned, we are interested in civil service reform insofar as it constitutes a strategy for the government to prepare the civil service for the democratic changes. So therefore definitely if not leaders, then definitely as agents of change—.
- GYAMTSHO: *Agents of change, that's better.*
- MUKHERJEE: The civil service is a very important piece of the entire democratic reform agenda of the government. That's why we came to interview you, and this interview has been very useful, so thank you for that.