

Volunteer corps

Volunteerism needs to be encouraged in Bhutanese society. Indeed, we argue that volunteerism is an expression of the Buddhist ethos. The spirit of volunteerism needs to be inculcated throughout to the school system through both teaching and activities. Over time, the GNH Directorate can establish volunteer corps in a variety of fields: teaching in remote areas, primary medical care delivery in areas not yet reached by the medical system, community construction work, youth work, etc. These corps would include programs for school leavers at various stages, training programs for a certain period of time, and maintenance income. The volunteers would learn skills as part of their volunteer activity which would improve their opportunities when they finished their volunteer work. The model for such GNH corps would be the Peace Corps, the Teach for America Corp., the Habitat Program, etc. It should be added that such an approach would also contribute alleviating certain potential problems, at least on a temporary basis, such as youth unemployment.

An especially interesting project may be the development of a Village Youth Corps that would bring volunteers from urban centers to the villages during vacations, particularly students of the 9th to 12th year, and would bring young villagers from one region to another, to work with the village youth on a variety of projects. Such a volunteer effort would have the advantage of encouraging urban and village young people to interact and of giving an opportunity for young people from one region of the country to visit and interact with young people in other parts of the country, thus encouraging a greater consciousness of the variety of Bhutanese culture and, at the same time, building a sense of belonging to a national community.

One very useful application of the idea of a Volunteer Corps would be the training of high school students in the use of tape recorders and the idea and techniques of recording folklore, the stories and songs of the villages, memories, oral local and family histories. For a minimal expense for the purchase of tape recorders and for training programs, Bhutan could use volunteers to build an important archive that would preserve for future generations the oral and musical culture of the country and that would become the raw material for many potential ventures in the creative arts. This would be an important contribution to the process of involving young people in the national project and in the construction of the national community GNH should encourage.

Education

One of the pillars upon which GNH must rest is education. The entire educational curriculum of Bhutanese schools needs to be infused with the GNH ethos. GNH values need to be taught at all levels of the school system. Textbooks and other training materials that specifically reflect Bhutanese and GNH values need to be written and used. In this way, GNH will become a reality for future generations.

Alongside the introduction of general GNH values into the curriculum, three particular problems need to be addressed. First, given the fact that so large