

Editorial

This is the 6th volume of *Rig Tshoel: Research Journal of the Royal Thimphu College*. Rig Tshoel freely translates to the “search for knowledge”, and its genesis and objectives the journal responds to RTC’s mission to “stimulate new ideas, knowledge, and practices that serve to enrich people’s lives and enhance the welfare of society.” Rig Tshoel is multi-disciplinary in its scope, spanning the humanities, business studies, social sciences, and other sciences. Rig Tshoel is also inclusive, in the sense that it aims to provide a platform for young and early career scholars to develop and publish their work. For enabling this, I convey my gratitude to both the editorial board and to the reviewers for lending their time and expertise.

This volume carries eight articles. The first is the transcript of a distinguished lecture delivered by T.B. Subba, the former Vice-Chancellor of Sikkim University, to RTC’s Himalayan Centre for Environmental Humanities (HCEH) in August 2023. The lecture, and this contribution, is titled “Growing Up in Greater Bhutan, Scaling the Anthropogenic Stages of Life.” The second article is co-authored by a team of RTC faculty, staff, and a former student. They are Yuzer Peldon, Tashi Choden, Bijayata Rai, and Dorji Wangchuk. Their research was enabled by an Erasmus+KA2 Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) Project that involves Bhutanese and European partners working towards developing capacity for the teaching-learning of qualitative research methods at colleges in Bhutan which teach social sciences and humanities programmes. The title of the article is: “Korean Cosmetics, Social Media, and Global Consumerism among Thimphu College Youth”, and explores the influence of Korean cosmetics and beauty standards on perceptions of self and identity among College-going youth in Thimphu.

The third article is by Thinley Dema and is titled: “Assessing Vegetation Dynamics in Lingzhi Using Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI).” This article applies the Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) to assess vegetation dynamics in Bhutan’s western highlands. Thinley Dema argues that assessing vegetation fluctuations help to understand varied anthropogenic impacts and pressures in the highlands, and that this knowledge is crucial for designing policy interventions. By combining scientific data with ethnographic insights, Thinley

Dema's article offers a multifaceted window into contemporary vegetation trends and patterns in the highlands. The fourth article is by Singay and is titled: "Understanding Cultural, Ecological, and Indigenous Literacy in Rural Bhutan: A Case Study of Gangtey Gewog." Singay calls for the expansion of the term literacy to also include cultural, ecological, and indigenous knowledge as it exists in Gangtey. Through four detailed life-histories, Singay details the relationship between people's background, upbringing, profession, and the kind of knowledge they possess, and shows how cultural, ecological, and indigenous knowledge can flourish even when the knowledge-holder is non- or semi-literate in the conventional sense of reading and writing skills.

The next article is titled "Preserving Traditional Medicinal Knowledge and Its Transmission in Dorokha, Samtse, Bhutan" and is researched and written by Tej Kumar Nepal. The article calls for the preservation of indigenous plant-knowledge, with special focus on those plants that carry medicinal value to humans. Tej Kumar Nepal finds a slow loss of traditional knowledge, for which he empirically identifies a range of reasons. The sixth article is written by Sonam Darjay and Dorji Wangchuk and is titled "Dakwala and Communications in Bhutan: A Narrative Study of Dakwalas of Pemagatshel." Prior to the arrival of modern communications, Dakwalas, who were postal runners, were tasked with connecting places and peoples by delivering messages in various forms. This article traces the origins, characteristics, and challenges of the dakwala system, as well as identifies its role in the making of modern Bhutan. The data for this article is based on life-history interviews with two former dakwalas of Pemagatshel.

The seventh article is by Soumya Pandey and Nithil Dennis and carries the title: "Shared Challenges Encountered by the Cottage and Small Industry in Bhutan – A Post-Pandemic Analysis." The point of departure, of this article, is that while the Cottage and Small Industries sector make up 95% of all businesses in Bhutan, they contribute only 5% to the country's GDP. This article systematically reviews and evaluates why this should be so, and offers possible remedies to the hurdles and challenges CSIs seem to face. The eighth and final article is by Shiriin Barakzai and is titled "The Consecration of a Bhutanese Drukpa Kagyu Temple in Nepal." It draws attention to the recent consecration of a temple in the Kathmandu Valley that was rebuilt following its partial destruction caused by the 2015 earthquake. By offering a

rich and multilayered historical analysis, Shiriin Barakzai traces the Bhutanese genealogy of this temple. It then arrives back to the present by offering documentary photos of the 2022 consecration.

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Editor-in-Chief