

ELECTION 2013

The defeat of 'one' could be the win of 'many that come together'

With five parties formally registered but still apprehensive about a win beyond the primaries against the seasoned incumbents, 'merger' is a catchphrase doing the rounds in many circles as a probability, but one that may surely come to realization in the nearing elections

Puran Gurung & Minjur Dorji/
Thimphu

Fishing for candidates in a political pool that is visibly dry of potential candidates was the old reality of the years that passed. It seems the reality is still the truth as new realizations for parties to unravel every other new constituencies or posts to occupy.

Given a calculated and pre-empted end to developments of now, mergers is not off the menu for most thinking minds right now.

Merger is on the cards and in the minds of every new political party after the primary rounds, if there is any. Merging will not be about coalition that electoral laws of the country disallow, it will be in the form of 'candidates hopping' and 'supporting one another'.

Speculation on merging of candidates is the talk that is red on agenda in the political scene and what makes it livelier or potential is formation of offshoot parties. When this happens, the 2013 elections will see former candidates of the same party contesting against the same pack.

Party watchers comment that new registered parties might defend against the merger plan that seems obvious in the country. As of now all the parties are registered and merging is also an option for them.

"In my observation as I

oversaw the party's internal review, there are hints of merging," said a close party worker. He also added that 'merging should be the strategy of the new parties'.

Taking in consideration the popularity of the party, finance and manpower resources, experience and better candidates 'merging should happen as the new parties have only few candidates that are known to people and bringing resources together will fare well for the parties' said a source.

Merger plan according to party watchers will happen in the manifest of candidates hopping to other parties after the primary round when their parties don't make it to the general round. Political analysts say this can be a good strategy for two reasons, one for a strong opposition institution and the other can be fair distribution of potential candidates so that there will not be a landslide victory like in 2008.

Another factor approving merger plan is that the presidents of the new parties as well as the People's Democratic Party (PDP)'s leader, they will all win from their constituencies and it would mean more votes and more seats in the parliament.

Going by candidates or the party president and the eligible voters- if the Opposition Leader (OL) with 7,520 eligible voters from Sombaykha, Haa, Bhutan

Jamie continues mission gross animal happiness



Picture Courtesy: Jamie's facebook page

Jamie with one injured dog and some of the animals at the shelter

Minjur Dorji / Thimphu

Daily life may have become for many routine, although it is for most still not free of its share of hassles. Now imagine that in a scenario where one has to sort out the usual daily activities at home, as well as doing an entirely different job as caring for numerous sentient beings, and after a long day, relive an altogether new day with the same challenges.

The intensity of these matters would for most of us induce an exponential level of fatigue and stress.

But this is not really, and unbelievably the case with Jamie Vaughan, an American woman in her early thirties who has spent years of her life dedicated to ease the sufferings of the many stray animals which end up run-down by vehicles, or just exposed to the cruel elements which devour them in the most horrid manners.

For this unusually-driven woman who has altruistically taken up the self-chosen duty to care and share for the more than hundred and fifty speechless animals in her shelter in Lango, Paro, life is but full of satisfaction and peace every day.

This most definitely gives a brand new spin to the word 'adaptation'.

Her more than four years old facility, which centers around and within her house, looks almost full to capacity, and though they're far away from their familiar territories, the animals seem to know they are safe and 'lucky'. Jamie, who has dedicated her life to sheltering animals in need, is a real blessing for many strays and wounded animals.

Despite the acute shortage of workers

at her shelter, Jamie and her four helpers work tirelessly for the survival of all the resident animals. "No day is ever a holiday. Dogs are fed individually, twice or thrice daily depending upon their condition and needs. All kennels, dog rooms, beds, barn, and surrounding grounds have to be cleaned daily," Jamie said.

While the whole area is filled with dogs, the ones in need of special care eat and sleep with Jamie in her own house. Living room, bedrooms, bathrooms and beds are occupied by more than 30 creatures of various shapes, sizes and colors - gray kittens and brown dogs, milky-eyed puppies, disabled, wounded, young, old, small and big.

And all animals have a name.

"So keeping clean is a constraint but important chore. Every room and bathroom has its own special friends," Jamie said. "Any animal, large or small, is always welcome," she added.

Jamie believes "the ability for people to have someone to call and or turn to when they see a sick, injured, or needy animal is crucial. Accidents and sickness don't just happen during office hours, it's often in the middle of the night, and on weekends or holiday when care is needed and often immediate care is the difference between life and death."

She moved to Paro in 2006.

"The first rescued dog I kept was one named Lucky, from the vegetable market at Paro in January 2007. A small puppy with a large knife wound to the shoulder and chest. I remember when I thought seven dogs was a lot, and then hit the 50 mark,

cont. from pg 1

Jamie continues mission gross animal happiness

and now it's more than 150 permanent residents. When I came here, I never intended to have an animal shelter and dedicate my life to them, but I do whatever I can, and I am thankful to be able to make this small contribution," she said.

Jamie said, during her initial days at Paro she was just devastated by the number of sick and injured dogs wandering through town. Owing to limited veterinary services there at the time she availed Marianne Guillet's help who manages Pilou Medical Center/Bhutan Animal Rescue and Care (now at Yusipang). "Then I realized I couldn't continue burdening her all the time, and needed to take responsibility for them here," she said.

Although the shelter continues to expand, financial constraints are a major setback for Jamie's initiatives. Funding is getting more challenging by the day as she spends more than Nu 4,000 a week just for rice to feed the animals.

She receives support from various individuals, tourists and organizations like rice, old blankets and clothing, wood for new kennels and repair work, biscuits, oil and hay among others. "For example, DK Tshongkhang in Paro always donates their old vegetables, fruits for the animals which are given directly or added to their food of rice, vegetables, oil, salt and donated-dry fish. Bananas are Norbu Drukpa's (the little bull's) favorite. We can find a use for nearly everything which others typically consider unusable," she said.

However, overhead costs for Jamie on an average amounts to about US\$ 3000 a month which are all funded with personal borrowed money from the United States.

Moreover she has worries about continued residency in Bhutan as "animals are not a part-time job, and not something one can easily leave behind."

Another prime issue is the dearth of workers.

Despite announcements in newspapers for workers with negotiable wages, it

elicited little or no response. "In addition to the four, there are four students temporarily employed for the school break and is always in need for more staff and volunteers," Jamie said.

Asked about where she finds all the animals, Jamie said community support is essential and she is glad "a lot of students and teachers bring or inform about orphan puppies, sick or injured of all ages, police from Paro phone when there is a car accident or a debilitated animal is found, shopkeepers from all around, hotels, tourists, monasteries, even Humane Society and Animal Husbandry will send or refer an animal when in-patient care is needed."

However, she said many people abandon animals by just ditching them at her gate late at night or early in the morning. "People are welcome to bring them anytime, day or night. I just wish they wouldn't be afraid to come to me rather than abandon them," she said. She explained that it was important to know the animal's history and commends people for at least taking the time to ensure they are looked-after.

Jamie has hopes that animal welfare will continue to improve as it has over the last several years in terms of facilities and veterinary care. "The sterilization campaign underway the last couple of year with HSI and Dep't of Livestock is a great start for reducing the dog population, but it requires year-round ongoing effort in every Dzongkhag," she said.

Jamie also said it is vital for authorities and concerned individuals to work together to make a difference and help end the needless suffering. "I'm thankful to be able to work with many concerned individuals and organizations in this regard, department of Livestock, Bhutan Animal Rescue and Care, Jangsa Animal Saving Trust, Bhutan Save Life, and the community. A single entity cannot do everything and it takes the collaboration and support of everyone to make a difference," she said.

She also hopes the tourism industry will take initiatives toward the cause of animal welfare and life saving. Since the majority of tourists hate to see animals suffering, she said that it would be great if Association of Bhutanese Tour Operators (ABTO) could have something similar to the TDF fund for animal welfare. "Everyone is familiar with GNH, and this extends to those that can't speak for themselves," she added.

"It's extremely disheartening to hear people say it is/was the animals "fate" or "karma" to die, be sick, get injured, or run over by a car. I don't believe it is any beings' karma to be left alone and dying without the possibility for care. As people we go to the hospital or call family and friends for help and our help to those in need, including animals, will create relief in the present and good karma for the future. Animals usually don't have an advocate, so we have to be their advocates. Every being deserves the right to love, care, warmth, food, and compassion," she said.

"For me, I'm just grateful that I am able to contribute and help in my own small way, and I hope I will be able to continue to do so," Jamie said.

Asked about progress ever since she came to Bhutan, she said there has been a lot of improvement noticed in the last six years in people's treatment of the animals. "I rarely see people pelting stones among other abuses anymore," she said.

"It's also great to see that dogs are more widely becoming "pets" rather than just an inconvenient fact of life. I always love seeing a dog traveling with his people in the vehicle with his or her head out the window enjoying the breeze."

Another issue she cited was the mindset of people. "It's a shame that many people are becoming only interested in pure breeds imported from outside. There are many equally wonderful and deserving animals in Bhutan which need homes," she said.

Jamie said many people



In Jamie's car- Puppies rescued from Paro Tshechhu

fail to realize that most of these imported animals come from puppy mills or similarly bad breeders which are often only interested in making profit by exploiting animals and generate a lot of animal suffering and abuse. The dogs are also usually weaker and more susceptible to illness and genetic problems from inbreeding. "Local dogs are stronger, more resilient, and again, make equally great and loyal companions," she said. "So the best thing we can do in the interest of the animals is to adopt those we see around us and not to engage in creating more suffering by buying animals from commercial mills".

Veterinary care, Jamie said is continually improving, but there is a long way to go. She said it needs to be available to everyone and all animals, not just pets or livestock, but all of those in need. "As with people, most illnesses and conditions require in-patient care, and are not treatable with one or two visits to the vet. Most animals, especially the weak, ill, and otherwise needy require long-term care, a safe place to call home, and a guaranteed food supply to survive. Strays unfortunately often don't have this luxury and need shelters such as this one to have a chance at life.

For example, young orphaned animals need hand-feeding every 2-3 hours for several weeks, paraplegics need physical therapy and vitamin treatment daily, broken limbs need casts or surgery and months to heal, and maggot wounds need daily cleaning, many just need lots of TLC to help compensate for the months or years of

malnutrition they've been subjected to."

Asked about her attachment with the animals she cited an example of Maya, a mare that she rescued. Maya was found injured in Paro. One of her hind legs, gashed and fractured in two places, the broken bones clearly visible was probably caused by a heavy vehicle.

With efforts to locate the owner proving futile, Jamie took responsibility. The mare was transported to her residence, where a basic structure to temporarily house the animal was constructed.

Besides feeding and cleaning the horse's wounds daily, Jamie found an equine orthopedic specialist from the US willing to come to Bhutan to perform what would be a life-saving operation on Maya, with surgical time donated, although the surgery still cost Jamie more than US\$ 23,000. But in the end Jamie managed to get the surgery done with help from the US doctors, Department of Livestock and Thimphu veterinarians, Marianne and Hendrik of Bhutan Animal Rescue and Care and the local community. "She was recovering well from the surgery but then passed away in May 2012 from colic, a condition treatable with emergency surgery, but no one here was able to do it."

She said Maya was a prime example of the wonderful miracles which can come about by everyone working together.

Jamie is also active on social network and information on adoption or any other details can be obtained from her Facebook page at www.facebook.com/barkleyvaughan.