

## **President of College Student Government: Making a History in the Election**

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Mr. Chayku (Bhutan)

March 24, 2018 will be remembered in Sherubtse College for creating a history during the election of the president of Forum for International and National Awareness (FINA). It is neither because of the election procedures nor of the voter turnout, but because a woman was elected for the very first time in 30 years.

Sonam Deki, a second year student of Dzongkha-History was elected as the first ever woman FINA president, beating Dorji Gyeltshen of Economics by 147 votes.

Known as the 'peak of learning' as its name indicates, Sherubtse College has set a precedent, and this has vitalized and fortified the pride of women. And Sonam thinks that there will be more women participants and more of them will get elected.

Like it or not, FINA in Sherubtse, the highest governing body in the oldest and renowned college, had only men taking part and getting elected as the FINA president and representatives. It was as if women had not been allowed to run for the election.



**FINA President 2018  
(Sonam Deki, the second from the right)**

The structure of FINA was such that the opportunity was availed and reserved only for men. Led by the president (male) in his third year, one male secretary in his second year and two male and one female representatives in their first year would make the entire forum until 2010. A group of activists in the college, who thought that women should also be given equal rights and opportunities to contest for FINA president, voiced concern and appealed to the authorities to create posts of two first-year female representatives and a second-year female secretary. In the proposal, they also asked for the equal opportunity for the third-year women to contest for FINA president.

It was worth fighting for the cause, for the college authorities accepted the proposal.

Surprisingly in 2011, just a year after the acceptance of the proposal, Thinley Zangmo, a second-year student of Dzongkha-English, was elected as the first woman secretary and then as the vice-president a year later. The onset of the trend had already begun then. It just signified the fact that women were equally capable of handling any responsibilities as men, and the people, irrespective of their gender, accepted that.

Ever since, women have been equally taking up the important posts in FINA, but men have always secured the president's post.

And now, eight years after the proposal, the college has just elected its first woman FINA president with so much grandeur.



**With a faculty member, right after the election**

“There’s nothing women can’t do. They just need to be given a chance to lead,” Sonam Deki said. She added that men and women are equally competent and the ‘inequality’ is just a story that we made up. And like Sonam, others hold the same view that currently the college authority has been giving everyone the same and equal platform and opportunity.

“This is the first of its kind in the college and we are happy that gender difference is no longer an issue for the educated people now,” said Karma Wangmo, a third-year student who voted in favour of Sonam Deki.

And the men in the college are also all smiles, as much as it has surprised Sonam, appreciating the caliber she has demonstrated.

“I am proud to be part of this institution where women can take part in everything free from stereotyped perception,” said Tenzin Dorji, who also voted in favour of Sonam. Tenzin also shared his view that everyone was overwhelmed by the history they created by electing the woman president for the first time in 30 years.

Meanwhile, Sonam wants to develop the already close and beautiful relations the college has built with the society around it, and looks forward to working together with others to create awareness on national issues such as alcohol, unemployment, waste management and taking responsibility.

With about 1,700 students and over one hundred faculty members, Sherubtse College conducts FINA election at the beginning of every year.