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TASHI DELEK

VOL. XXVI | ISSUE VI | NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2025

ON THE WINGS OF THE DRAGON



SPECIAL EDITION
70th Birth Anniversary of
His Majesty The Fourth King



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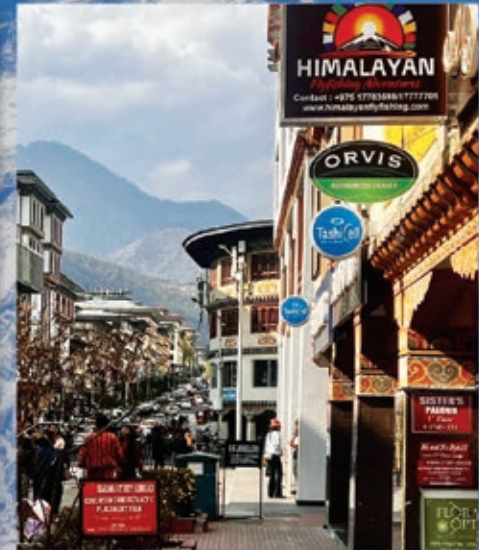
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Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation (BTF) is the world's first Environmental Trust Fund, established in 1991.

Mission

Leverage, upscale, and accelerate innovative financing to enhance environmental conservation.

Endowment

Inspired by the vision of our Fourth Druk Gyalpo, His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, BTF is able to disburse USD 2m annually to support environmental conservation and climate change initiatives in Bhutan.

Vision

Social wellbeing in Bhutan secured through environmental conservation.



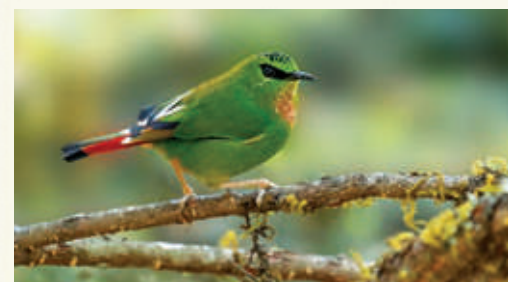
BTF is the only accredited entity in Bhutan to the Adaptation Fund (AF) and the Green Climate Fund (GCF).



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Since its inception, BTF has funded more than 288 projects in 20 districts of Bhutan, amounting to a total of USD 35m, in the four priority thematic areas of:

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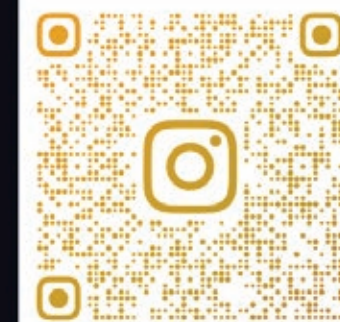
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TASHI DELEK

Tashi Delek is an auspicious and versatile Bhutanese expression. It is a word or an expression encompassing a number of meanings such as wishing you well, good wishes, congratulations, may many good things come to you, cheers, and good luck.

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Dear Passengers,

As we approach the close of the year, I am honored to extend my warmest welcome to you aboard Drukair, Royal Bhutan Airlines.

This November, the Kingdom of Bhutan celebrates a deeply cherished and historic milestone: the 70th Birth Anniversary of His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, Jigme Singye Wangchuck. This occasion invites us not only to reflect on His Majesty's extraordinary leadership, but also to honor the profound vision that has shaped our nation's identity and progress including the very skies we now traverse.

It was under His Majesty's visionary leadership and gracious patronage that Drukair was founded with the Royal Proclamation on April 5, 1981. What began as an 18-seater Dornier 228-200 aircraft connecting Paro to the outside world has grown into a proud symbol of our sovereignty, self-reliance, and balanced modernization. Drukair was and remains a tangible expression of His Majesty's aspiration to strengthen national sovereignty and international connectivity, support a high-value tourism policy, and ensure that Bhutan engages with the world on its own terms, while preserving its unique identity, culture and values.

We remain deeply inspired by His Majesty's enduring legacy. Today, as we expand our horizons, we continue to uphold the guiding principles His Majesty instilled in us, excellence in service, national pride, and responsible global engagement.

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Tandi Wangchuk
Chief Executive Officer
Drukair Corporation Ltd.

for passengers and travel agents to discover, plan, and book journeys to Bhutan with greater convenience. In parallel, the adoption of advanced payment solutions significantly enhances the security, reliability, and ease of cross-border transactions, ensuring a seamless and user-friendly booking experience. These initiatives reflect our ongoing focus on digital innovation, operational excellence, and the warmth of Bhutanese hospitality as we strengthen our role in connecting Bhutan to the world.

As we look to the future, we remain firmly guided by our values and the vision of His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo. Drukair's purpose extends beyond connecting places as we strive to connect people: to Bhutan, to our heritage, and to each other.

Whether you are visiting our country for the first time or returning home, we are honored to be a part of your journey.

To you, our valued passengers, we extend our deepest gratitude. Your trust in Drukair fuels our purpose and inspires our journey forward.

May the closing months of 2025 bring you peace, joy, and fulfilment. We wish you and your loved ones a happy and prosperous New Year ahead.



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TASHI DELEK
FACTS ABOUT
BHUTAN



NATIONAL FLAG

The National Flag is divided diagonally into two equal halves. The upper yellow half signifies the secular power and authority of the King while the lower saffron-orange symbolizes the practice of religion and the power of Buddhism, manifested in the tradition of Drukpa Kagyu. The dragon signifies the name and the purity of the country while the jewels in its claws stand for wealth and perfection of the country.



NATIONAL EMBLEM

The National Emblem of Bhutan is a circle that projects a double diamond thunderbolt placed above the lotus. There is a jewel on all sides with two dragons on vertical sides. The thunderbolts represent the harmony between secular and religious power while the lotus symbolizes purity. The jewel signifies the sovereign power while the two dragons (male and female) represent the name of the country Drukyl or the Land of the Dragon.



NATIONAL FLOWER

The National Flower is the Blue Poppy (*Meconopsis Gakyidiana*). It is a delicate purple or blue tinged with purple blossom with distinctly concave petals. This species grows at an elevation of 3700-4300 meters above sea level. *Gakyidiana* is an epithet based on the Dzongkha word for happiness, *gakyid*, to reflect Bhutan's important cultural aspiration of 'Gross National Happiness' and *diana* is nomenclature term for the flower.



NATIONAL DRESS

Men wear the Gho, a knee-length robe that is tied at the waist by a traditional belt known as Kera. Women wear the Kira, a long, ankle-length dress accompanied by a light outer jacket known as a Tego with an inner layer known as a Wonju.



NATIONAL GAME

Archery was declared as the national game in 1971 when Bhutan became a member of the United Nations. Bhutan also maintains an Olympic archery team. Archery is played during public holidays in Bhutan and local festivals.



NATIONAL BIRD

The National Bird is the Raven (*Corvus corax*). The Raven adorns the Royal Crown. The raven represents the deity Gonpo Jarodongchen (raven headed Mahakala), one of the chief guardian deities of Bhutan.



NATIONAL TREE

The National Tree is the Cypress (*Cupressus torolusa*). Cypresses are found in abundance and one may notice large cypresses near temples and monasteries. This tree is found in temperate climate zone, between 1800 and 3500 meters.



NATIONAL ANIMAL

The National Animal is the Takin (*Burdorcas taxicolor*) and is associated with religious history and mythology. It is a rare mammal with a thick neck and short muscular legs. It lives in groups and is found above 4000 meters on the north-western and far north eastern parts of the country.



CLIMATE SEASON

Bhutan has four seasons. Spring from March until April followed by Summer with occasional showers until late September. Autumn follows until late November, characterized by sunny days. Winter until March, with snowfall in regions above 3,000 meters.



NATIONAL AIRLINE

Drukair, the Royal Bhutan Airlines, is the National flag carrier of Bhutan. Drukair was founded on April 5, 1981 under the Royal Charter by His Majesty the Fourth King Jigme Singye Wangchuck. Drukair plays a vital role in promoting Bhutan as a tourist destination and plays an important role in connecting Bhutan to the world.



CARBON STATUS

Bhutan is the first carbon negative country in the world, absorbing six million tons of carbon every year. The Constitution of Bhutan places a high premium on conservation of its natural environment, mandating the country to maintain at least 60 percent of its land under forest cover for all times to come.



DEVELOPMENT PHILOSOPHY

Promulgated by His Majesty the Fourth King His Majesty the Fourth King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, Gross National Happiness guides all development process in Bhutan. The central objective of GNH is to ensure a holistic and sustainable development by balancing the material and the non-material values.



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Bhutan National Bank

A Joyous Celebration of a Visionary King

On this auspicious occasion of the 70th Birth Anniversary of His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, Bhutan National Bank joins the nation in the celebration and offering our profound gratitude.

We honor a monarch whose visionary leadership has profoundly shaped modern Bhutan. His Majesty's enduring legacy is woven into the very fabric of our kingdom, from the pioneering philosophy of Gross National Happiness to his unwavering dedication to environmental conservation and cultural preservation.

This milestone is a collective tribute to a beloved King whose wisdom and compassion have left an indelible mark on the hearts of the Bhutanese people and admirers around the world. May this special birth anniversary bring joy and unity to all who are inspired by his remarkable life and enduring influence.

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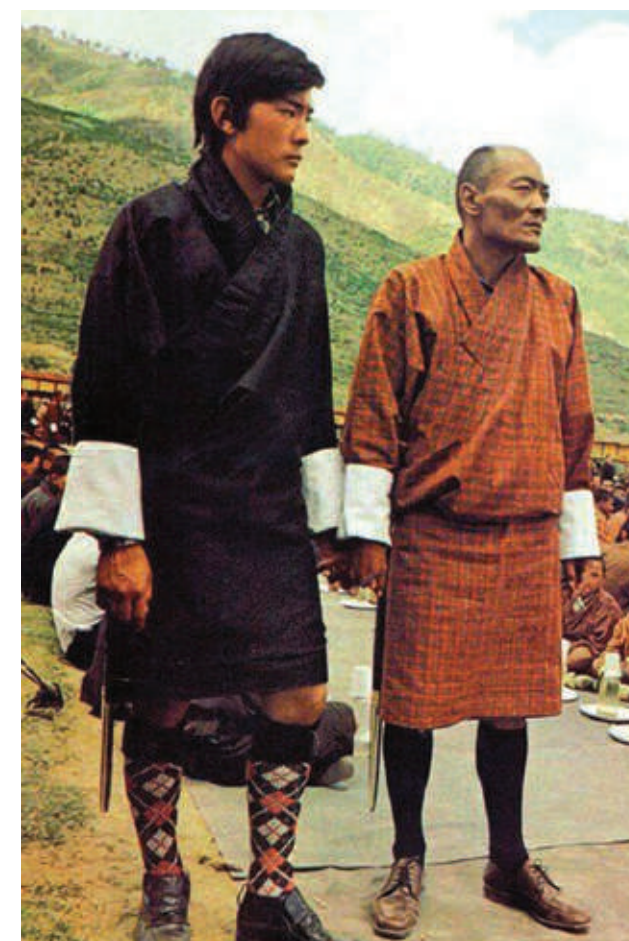
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Roses in the Snow



In the summer of 1972, His Majesty King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, the Third King of Bhutan, passed away in Nairobi, Kenya. The untimely death brought sixteen-year-old Crown Prince Jigme Singye Wangchuck to the throne and it was the young King's sad duty to bring his late father home to a grieving nation.

I stood with others under the willow trees beside the gates of the Riverside Palace as the cortège came down the road and paused before the last bend for the followers to step out of their cars. They would follow on foot for this final part of the journey. The vehicle carrying the late King was preceded by a plain military jeep.

His late Majesty would sometimes move incognito amongst his people. It was simpler then, with no newspapers or TV making our Royals easily recognizable. His Majesty would dress as an ordinary soldier and travel around in a plain military jeep.

The cortège moved slowly past and we saw that the vacant passenger seat of the jeep held only a single white silk scarf. As the procession passed through the palace gates, the reverently silent crowd sank down in prostration. The long journey had ended in a sense of easing, a homecoming. Then Bhutan withdrew from the world and turned inwards to mourn.



Summer turned into autumn. On the eleventh of November, his seventeenth birthday, the young King was at the Punakha Dzong. In this historic fortress, the Je Kenpo, head of religion in the country, would preside over a sacred ceremony of great importance, the ‘inner coronation’ of His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the Fourth King of Bhutan. His Majesty would then return over the pass to Thimphu.

That morning, Thimphu residents awoke to an unexpected blanket of snow with big furry flakes still falling, yet it did not seem to be particularly cold. My husband Paljor and I were to go to Dechencholing Palace to help prepare the welcome ceremony for His Majesty’s return. The palace is a gracious traditional building at the head of the valley, set in attractive gardens and wide terraces with steps leading down to the main gateway. That morning the scene was a snowy wonderland.

The drawing room on the first floor of the palace was lovely. The wide deep windows overlook the gardens and the furnishings were in traditional style with warm nectarine-colored walls and painted designs picked out in ultramarine and gold. Divans cushioned in jewel-toned brocades were interspersed with low carved and painted tables set with exquisite objects and silver framed photographs. There were silver bowls of fragrant roses, fortunately cut before the snowfall and glowing in glorious shades of ruby, amber, ivory and blush pinks. There were voices and laughter from the garden below. I looked out of

a window and saw Paljor helping the young princesses to build a snowman.

Under the direction of Her Majesty the Queen Mother, Ashi Kesang Choden Wangchuck, I helped to set out silver bowls of coloured wafers, fruit, nuts and sweets. There was news of some difficulty on the road over the pass due to the snow and causing some delay for the Royal party.

All the preparations were done. I knelt by a window on the soft carpet, feeling wrapped in the peace of that most lovely room.

It is good, I thought. It will be fine. A new reign beginning, the steady frame of tradition and culture, and the warm family love to encourage. There’s youth, freshness, and new ideas. I looked out beyond the bowl of roses beside me to the snowy flank of the hillside opposite. And there’s blank pages of history yet to be written.

There were voices in the ante-room. The snowman builders were back, wanting hot tea and dry shoes.



LOUISE DORJI

She came to Bhutan in 1966. She married and has three sons. She was closely involved in setting up the Bhutan Broadcasting Service. Since retiring Louise has written several illustrated books for young children.’

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On the auspicious occasion of the 70th Birth Anniversary of His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo Jigme Singye Wangchuck, Vajra Builders Private Limited offers solemn prayers and best wishes for His Majesty’s long life, good health and everlasting happiness.



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Bhutan's Lineage of Dragon Kings

Bhutan is sometimes referred to as the Land of the Dragon Kings. It is country as renown for its natural beauty and environmental conservation, as it is for its history, cultural practices and rich traditions handed down through the generations. One rich cultural tradition centers on its line of monarchs who are considered benevolent, far-sighted and wise.

Indeed, when travelling through Bhutan, it is hard not to miss the homage, reverence, devotion and respect showered on its Kings. Pictures of The Five Kings of Bhutan are devotedly placed everywhere, from public to private spaces. The montage of the Five Kings often features respectfully on the walls of restaurants, shops, offices and tourist establishments, to people's homes and

residences. Photographs of the present King and His father The Fourth King are also found on the altars of Bhutan's lhakhangs (temples), as well as on the thrones of its most prominent dzongs (temple-fortresses).

The term Kings is used in the plural sense because reverence from the people of Bhutan is relayed across the generations, to the lineage of its Kings, from past Kings - The First, Second and Third Kings of Bhutan - to its present Kings, The Fourth King and The Fifth King of Bhutan, all of whom represent a hereditary lineage dating back to the early 1900s.

In this special issue dedicated to The Fourth King of Bhutan, also reverently known as the Great Fourth, this article provides a brief historical overview of the lineage

of Bhutan's Five Kings. This brief journey of The Kings of Bhutan will pique the interest of those who are new to Bhutan, visiting for the first time, or those who want to learn more about the background and history of the Royal Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan.

Pre-History

In 1616, Bhutan was unified into a single religious state by its founder, Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel. He established a dual system of governance of religion and politics, divided into the Central Monastic Body headed by the Je Khenpo (Chief Abbot), and the political body headed by the Desi (the secular ruler). The early 1900s was a time of political instability and change, marked by internal conflicts and fragmentation. During this time, Ugyen Wangchuck (born in 1862) rose to power, and soon became the governor of Bhutan.

The First King of Bhutan (Reign 1907-1926) Unifier of Bhutan

In the years leading to His Monarchy, He developed close relations with the British, and assisted in negotiations between Britain and Tibet. In 1904, the British knighted him, from which point on he would have the title of Sir

Ugyen Wangchuck. He continued to receive honors from both Britain and India, given his exceptional diplomatic leadership skills in the region, while ensuring sovereignty of his own country.

With a vision to unify Bhutan under singular leadership, Ugyen Wangchuck's leadership and diplomatic skills enabled Him to consolidate power, and to transition the country to a monarchy. In 1907, He was elected The First Druk Gyalpo (The Dragon King) of Bhutan, marking the establishment of the monarchy, and the beginning of the Wangchuck dynasty. He played a pivotal role in not only unifying the country, but also modernizing the country's administration, institutionalizing centralized government, modernizing its judicial system and physical infrastructure, and establishing formal diplomatic ties with British India which helped to strengthen Bhutan's position regionally.

His reign brought about a stable, progressive and modern era that set the stage for the future development of Bhutan, while preserving its unique socio-cultural heritage, legacy and national identity. His legacy continues to influence the country's political-economic and socio-cultural landscape.

The Second King of Bhutan (Reign 1926-1952) Stabilizing Force of Bhutan

Upon the passing away of His father, Jigme Wangchuck (born in 1905) ascended the throne in 1926, and was coronated the Second King of Bhutan. His upbringing prepared Him to become the successor to the throne, which included a strict education in English and Hindi, and schooling in Buddhist principles. His reign marked not only the continuation of the Wangchuck dynasty, but also stability, gradual modernization, and furthering progress through the strengthening of central administrative and legal systems in the country, including the development of infrastructure and public services.

During His reign, He fostered closer ties with British India, which later became the independent nation-state of India. He is most remembered for his dedication to preserving Bhutan's sovereignty and cultural heritage, while conscientiously maintaining its isolation, which at that time helped to protect it from external influences, and to preserve internal unity and stability. Upon His death, He was succeeded by his eldest son.

The Third King of Bhutan (Reign: 1952-1972) Father of Modern Bhutan

Jigme Dorji Wangchuck was born in 1929 and ascended the throne at the age of 23. Like his father, He received an education in English, Hindi and Buddhist principles, and spent six months in His youth in England. He is

often referred to as the Father of Modern Bhutan. This is because He ended Bhutan's isolation to a great extent by establishing international relations to ensure the country's sovereignty at a time of great instability in the region. He engaged with foreign nations, invited discussions on Bhutan's development, led his country to join the United Nations in 1971, and directed Bhutan's joining the Colombo plan which enabled the country to benefit from technical assistance and international education.

His reign marked the beginning of Bhutan's journey towards democracy, modernization, development and foreign relations that opened the country to the outside world. Internally, He initiated socio-economic reforms, including after his coronation, the abolishment of serfdom and capital punishment, and the end of feudalism in 1956. He also proceeded with the redistribution of land, and in 1961 the introduction of Bhutan's first five-year economic development plan. Most notably, He also established the country's modern judicial system, the first Council of Ministers, and the National Assembly which had the power to remove The King or His successors. The Third King was a pivotal figure in the country's history, given His far-sighted policies that shaped Bhutan's governance and socio-economic development trajectory in significant ways.

The Fourth King of Bhutan (Reign: 1972-2006)
Compassionate King of Bhutan

Jigme Singye Wangchuck, born in 1955, ascended the throne in 1972 after His father's sudden passing away in Kenya at the age of 43. He was 16 years old, making Him the youngest monarch in the world at that time. His education encompassed not only modern-style education in the United Kingdom and India, but also first-hand engagement with the people of Bhutan during extensive tours with His father. In 1988, He simultaneously married four sisters, known as the Four Queen Mothers. This was based on a prophecy that He would marry four sisters who were descendants of the Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, who as mentioned earlier was a great lama that unified Bhutan in the 17th century.

Based on this bottom-up engagement with the people of Bhutan and foresighted wisdom, He initiated significant political-economic policies, reforms and shifts towards democratic governance, such as decentralizing power through the establishment of the office of the Prime Minister of Bhutan in 1988. Under His reign, the country cautiously opened up further to the outside world, becoming more involved with the United Nations, strengthening its sovereign and national security status, joining several international multilateral bodies and



promoting international relations. For the first time in its history, Bhutan established a national airline Drukair – Royal Bhutan Airlines in 1981 (also the publisher of the very magazine you are now reading!). This allowed for the opening of the country to foreign and regional tourists under the ground-breaking policy of High Value, Low Volume Tourism.

During His reign, He also initiated socio-economic reforms and policies that played a key role in the modernization of Bhutan, including enhancing the nation's infrastructure, and advancing progress in industries such as natural resources, agriculture and hydropower. He also prioritized cultural preservation, environmental conservation, as well as education by expanding facilities in the country and supporting students to study abroad. In an unprecedented and historic move that characterizes His visionary wisdom, The Fourth King of Bhutan voluntarily abdicated the throne in 2006 to His son, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck. This transition marked a major turning point for Bhutan, and the beginning of a nation as a democratic constitutional monarchy.

The legacy of the Fourth King is far ranging, given His pathbreaking vision and milestone initiatives. He not only continues to be revered across the country



beyond his 35-year reign, He is well known the world over for formulating the moral concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH), which refers to a form of holistic development that challenges the narrow and environmentally destructive tenets of endless economic growth. That GNH has is encoded in the constitution of Bhutan and institutionalized in government policies demonstrates His commitment to the wellbeing of His people, leaving a lasting legacy on Bhutan's development trajectory. This vision has inspired many people across the world, including myself, as a researcher and advocate of GNH for almost a decade and half. On this occasion of His Majesty's 70th Birth Anniversary, I join the people of Bhutan and millions of people across the world in wishing Him a long life and happiness, as He Himself has envisioned for His beloved country and the rest of the world.

The Fifth King of Bhutan (Reign: 2006 to present)
The People's King of Bhutan

Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck was born in 1980, and coronated as Fifth King of Bhutan on November 1, 2008, also the centennial anniversary of the monarchy in Bhutan. His studies included formal education from

the United States, England and India. Following the legacies of His father toward the democratization of the country, one His first acts as King of Bhutan was the finalization, institutionalization and implementation of the Constitution of Bhutan, thus formalizing democracy in the nation.

The Fifth King of Bhutan brought about several landmark projects, including the National Cadastral Survey in 2009 focusing on improving the lives of rural people in Bhutan, and the establishment of the Kidu (roughly translated as welfare, support and assistance for those in need) Foundation in 2011 aimed at providing funds for people in need including the elderly, children, differently abled and people requiring medical attention. Its role is to supplement government efforts in supporting education, the rule of law, democracy, media, sustainable economic development, and the preservation of environmental and cultural heritage.

In 2011, His Majesty married Jetsun Pema, who was crowned the Druk Gyaltsuen (The Queen) of the Royal Kingdom of Bhutan. The Royal Wedding drew national and international media attention alike, with the nation glued to their televisions to celebrate the biggest media event in the country's history. The Royal couple would go on to have two sons and one daughter. Gyalsey Jigme Namgyel Wangchuck was born in 2016, followed by Gyalsey Jigme Ugyen Wangchuck in 2020, and Gyalsem Sonam Yangden Wangchuck in 2023 – all of whom bring delight and joy to the people of Bhutan, thus ensuring continuing a legacy of stability, sovereignty, and peace to the country.

During His reign, the King prioritized the modernization, development, environmental conservation and preservation of the national culture and identity of Bhutan. His innovative initiatives ranged from the launching of the Desuung (Guardians of Peace) voluntary program of citizens who play an active role in nation-building, to raising the profile of Bhutan through the two-year program of the Secretariat for a New Development Paradigm that brought GNH to the international stage, and to innovative plans for the development of Gelephu Mindfulness City as an economic, socio-cultural, and environmentally sustainability hub for the nation, serving as an example to the world of wellbeing placed at the center of development.

He is often referred to as the People's King, given his open, approachable, compassionate and humble style of leadership, and his efforts to balance modernization with preserving cultural and environmental heritage. During many official events, he is often found mingling amongst His people as well as inquisitively enquiring after the



wellbeing of foreigner visitors from all over the world. I have experienced this myself, as I was often greeted warmly by Him during many national events I attended over the span of over a decade of living and working in Bhutan. What struck me the most was His compassion towards all sentient beings, and towards all His people, including the highlanders of Bhutan who live in remote areas of the country. Indeed, in 2016, He founded the Royal Highland Festival which celebrates the lives and livelihoods of pastoralists, yak herders and highlanders in the country – an event that now draws large crowds from Bhutan and around the world. In an increasingly fractured and unpredictable world, His Majesty the King has led his country through troubled times, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, with compassion, wisdom, and dedication to peace and balance.

Towards A Mindfulness Nation

Bhutan’s democratic constitutional monarchy is special, in that the King of Bhutan plays an active role in the governance, development, policy-making, and happiness of His people, based on principles of holistic wellbeing. The lineage of the Five Kings of Bhutan, saw the nation of Bhutan emerge from isolation, to cautiously opening up to the rest of the world, on its own terms and in

path-breaking ways. In many ways, the nation acts as a role model for the rest of the world, especially in terms of being the first carbon negative country in the world (a country that absorbs more carbon than it emits – which is critically important in the global context of climate crises), transitioning mindfully and peacefully from a monarchy to a democracy, providing the world a development alternative framework that views development as a holistic pathway towards wellbeing, and formulating innovative initiatives that place environmental, cultural, socio-economic and spiritual mindfulness at the heart of development itself. This approach seeks to balance modernity and heritage through mindfulness, as well as balancing the needs of people, the planet and all sentient beings through compassion and kindness.



DR RITU VERMA

An anthropologist, researcher, author and photographer, she has published extensively on GNH, Bhutan, and beyond. She is a regular columnist in this magazine. Find her at rituvermapuri.wordpress.com, ucla.academia.edu/RituVerma and twitter.com/Rituvermapuri

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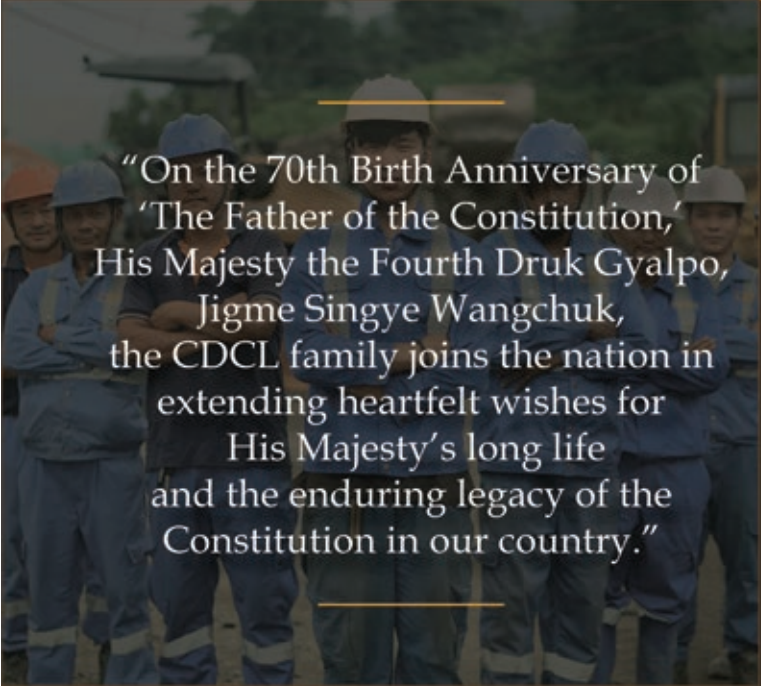
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“On the 70th Birth Anniversary of ‘The Father of the Constitution,’ His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, Jigme Singye Wangchuk, the CDCL family joins the nation in extending heartfelt wishes for His Majesty’s long life and the enduring legacy of the Constitution in our country.”

It's a Feeling ...

I found my way to Bhutan as one would track a trail of bent twigs through a forest. Unbeknownst to me, they were leading me home.

With my work as creative director for a UN NGO, I had been seeking stories on successful sustainable practices for years. In 2006 they weren't readily available. I was in Hawaii covering the permaculture movement when monsoon rains shut filming down. I found my way to a Yoga studio.

On a break I wandered into their gift shop. A rack of cards caught my eye. Hand-made, hand signed "*Bhutan*", under photographs of prayer flags, crystal clear rivers and Taktsang, the Tigers Nest. An exquisite monastery constructed impossibly on a sheer cliff face. Every cell in my body sparked and like a greedy child I bought them all.

I had filmed His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Sikkim and Mother Teresa in Calcutta – so close - yet I had never heard of the Kingdom of Bhutan. Intuitively I knew I must go there.

The minute I stepped off the plane, the high was palpable. I had entered a culture of creativity. Even the airport is a work of art. Blessed with Karma, my brilliant guide, I absorbed as much of Bhutan and its people as ten days could offer. Shangri-la, no longer a myth. Bhutan, economically a developing nation, gift their citizens with

free healthcare and free education. Imagine the progress of civilization if every life had that foundation. Back in Thimphu I met with government officials to discover if or how I may be of service to such benevolent governance.

I served on the Board of Ted Turner's Captain Planet Foundation and secured permission to gift Bhutan three seasons of the famed *Captain Planet and the Planeteers* cartoon series. While delivering them to BBS National network, a young producer tapped me on the shoulder, "*My father wants to meet you.*"

His father, Michael Rutland, a British national, and Bhutanese citizen was Math and Science teacher to the Crown Prince until 1971. When I arrived at his home, he greeted me with,

"Oh, you just missed him."

"Missed who?" "I asked.

"The King."

Days earlier, His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, much to the dismay of his people, announced his immediate abdication from the throne. Initiating his selfless plan to transition Bhutan into a two-party democracy.

"Tomorrow is my last day." I said sadly.

"Then we are in luck!" Michael cheered. "You will be my guest for National Day."

At my hotel, I asked the front desk where I could purchase traditional dress for tomorrow's celebrations, and they eagerly led me to the shops downstairs.

Sunrise December 17, came a knock at my door. Never had a sister, yet now I had four, all excitedly wrapping me into my exquisitely woven Kira making me feel so special. Living together, as one family is innate to the Bhutanese. And they have the data to prove community and family unity helps us live longer, safer, healthier, happier lives.

Everything was a feast for the eyes. Under the shade of the Royal tent, we partook in traditional refreshments while the military showed their colors, then there was singing and dancing, three legged and sack races, all echoing my Australian childhood memories.

"Let's introduce you to the King," Michael said, as His Majesty, moved through the tent, visiting with his Generals and Dashos, ministers and monks, some of whom would later become my friends,

I wasn't prepared for confronting quite possibly the most handsome man I have ever met. I drew inward. Make no mistake. I live in Malibu, California; filmed pop stars and Presidents, yet I was in the energetic space of someone who oozed the charisma of a King, the focus of a scientist, the power of an athlete and yet he leaned in to me with the humblest demeanor.

What to say? I sorted through what I knew of him.

Bhutan had freshly joined the United Nations when his much-loved father passed suddenly in 1972, and Crown Prince Jigme was 16 and half years young. What initially appeared as a great misfortune befalling the teenager and his family and the Kingdom, transformed into a legacy of





epic munificence for Bhutan and its people.

The young King immediately sought ways to build his fledgling nation's economic strength and resource resilience, while protecting his lands' untouched nature and his people's sensitive culture from the whims of the world.

He became a master of observation. Meeting world leaders, scrutinizing their strategies and statistics, weighing their wins and losses while holding every choice up to their high spiritual Buddhist values. He visioned a development philosophy of contentment for all life, that to this day remains ahead of its time.

"Gross National Happiness is far more important than gross national product." Said to be an offhanded comment by the young King to an Indian journalist, I felt his revelation, founded on four pillars came from much work and divine inspiration. Standing speechless I knew, "there is nothing off-handed about this man."

I felt an overwhelming gratitude. I had found the future vision so many have been seeking. The idea that could change the world. "Thank you." I mumbled.

When the elephants exited the field, I left the tent to walk the periphery of the stadium. Maybe catch a baby's smile or find a tree to lean on.

Suddenly, the crowd ahead straightened. I turned to see dashing- like-a-rock-star, 27-year-old future King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck following behind.

'Oh no.' I thought, this is his people's moment to meet their future 'King of Hearts' as they had already dubbed him. Quickly I pushed myself back into the crowd. He continued his warm greetings, then spotting the newcomer, he moved towards me. The gathering parted like the sea. He gestured, admiring my kira, "You look lovely today".

Back at my hotel, my new sisters were all waiting. "We saw you on national TV!" They sang elated and proud. "You met both Kings!" I felt like a beloved family member returning home after a life changing journey.

Two years later. June 2009. I was greeted at the entrance to Tashichhodzong by a beautiful young woman, Tsedon Dorji. She walked me along the pathway lined with rose bushes of unimaginable color, her voice so caring it chimed like bells. And a lifetime friendship began. She handed me over to a highly medaled Bhutanese General who formally pulled out his sword and bowed. Butterflies found formation in my tummy as he led me, saluting guards at every passageway before escorting me up a steep staircase. A double salute, he bowed respectfully and transferred me into the care of His Majesty's aide.

The waiting room for visiting dignitaries is rich with

comfort. The freshness of constant attention upon a place that had been this way for a long time. Before I could partake of the tasty offerings, His Majesty's secretary beckoned me towards the King's office, saying, "It will be fifteen minutes. Never any longer."

More than an hour later, the Secretary cracked the door, for the third time. His Majesty asked that we exchange Facebook addresses.

My heart raced with a familiarity I had felt ever since I stepped onto Bhutanese soil. The trees called to me. The air sang to me. The people laughed with me. Unexpectedly my heart leapt out of my mouth,

"I feel as if I have lived here before. In another time."

His Majesty relaxed me with a broad grin, "Yes. I believe you have."

Then he did something unusual. He stood and moved aside to reveal his chair.

"This was my father's chair. And his ..." The fifth King's voice trailed off. For a moment we held silence for the sovereign tapestry of meditation, consultation and intention this beloved chair had witnessed.

He reached down to the beautifully woven seat cushion, his long, elegant fingers lifting the faded dangling strands. "It's well worn." He chuckled, lovingly patting the ancient threads back into place.

That was 16 and half years ago. I have been blessed with other Royal audiences since, yet this one remains indelible. I felt the burden and the joy; the responsibility and the passion to amplify the remarkable legacy of his father, the Great Fourth.

It's 2025. The world's first carbon neutral nation is manifesting the next iteration of GNH. Perhaps an extension of his father's divine download, a new vision is born, uniting technology and culture; progress and spirituality; to bring the head and the heart of the world into balance. Bhutan is about to break ground on the Gelephu International Airport, the Gateway to earth's first Mindfulness City. Inviting the world to come and feel what it's like to live this close to heaven.

They say it takes a village to raise a child, perhaps, it will take a tiny Kingdom to raise a world?



CHRISTINA STEVENS

Founder, CVO EvolutionLove. world, award winning author and filmmaker, she has spoken many times at the UN Headquarters New York on Gross National Happiness.



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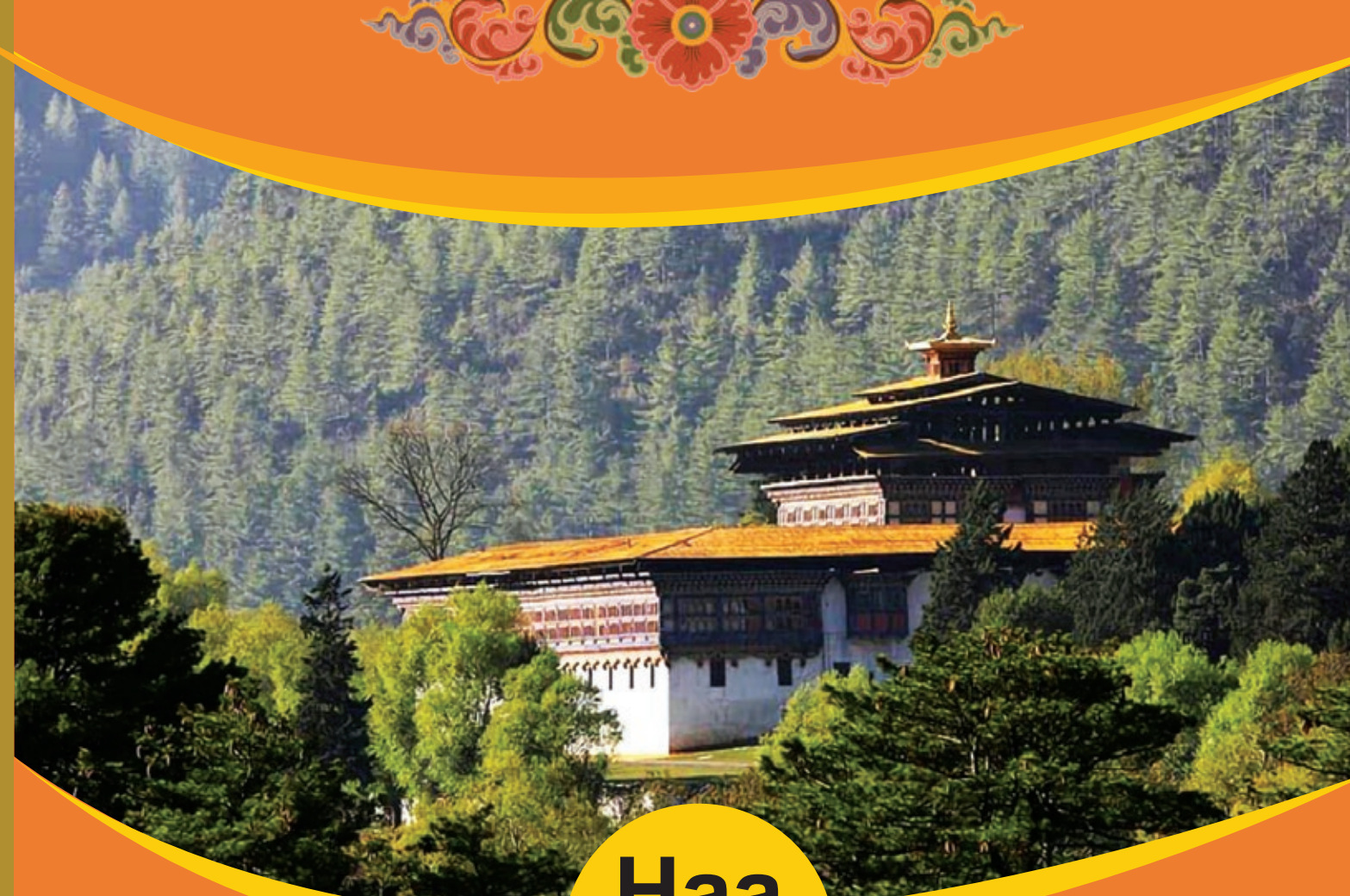


For generations, the trail served as the lifeline of the nation — a path where Monarchs journeyed across mountains and valleys to meet their people, to listen, and to protect. It stands today as a witness to Bhutan's enduring unity and compassion, values that continue to define our kingdom.

On this auspicious day, the Trans Bhutan Trail joins the nation in offering our heartfelt prayers for His Majesty The Fourth Druk Gyalpo's long life and good health. We come together to pay tribute to an extraordinary and truly visionary leader — whose wisdom, courage, and compassion continue to guide Bhutan and inspire generations.

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Haa Lay Mi Lay

"Whatever changes we bring about in Bhutan, so long as it is in the best interest of the country, the final decision lies with the Bhutanese people. And that is how it should be".

On the joyous occasion of the 70th Birth Anniversary of our beloved Fourth Druk Gyalpo Jigme Singye Wangchuck, **Haa Dzongkhag** joins the Nation in offering our deepest respects, hearty felicitations and prayers for His Majesty's prosperous life and good health.

Tashi Delek La

The Philosopher King



in the Year of the Female Wood Sheep. On November 11, 1955, that prophecy seemed to find form when Jigme Singye Wangchuck was born at Dechencholing Palace to His Majesty King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck and Queen Ashi Kezang Choden Wangchuck.

Fate moved swiftly. When his father, the revered Third King, died unexpectedly in Nairobi in 1972, the burden of the crown fell on the 16-year-old Crown Prince. Days later, addressing his grieving people, he urged unity over sorrow: “We must unite our minds for the sake of the strength and progress of our country.”

By age 16, he had become the world’s youngest head of state. Two years later, in 1974, his coronation drew leaders from across Asia and beyond. In his first royal address, he spoke not of power but of self-reliance, declaring: “A little effort on your part will be much effective than a great deal of effort on the part of the government”.

A Brave King for a New Era

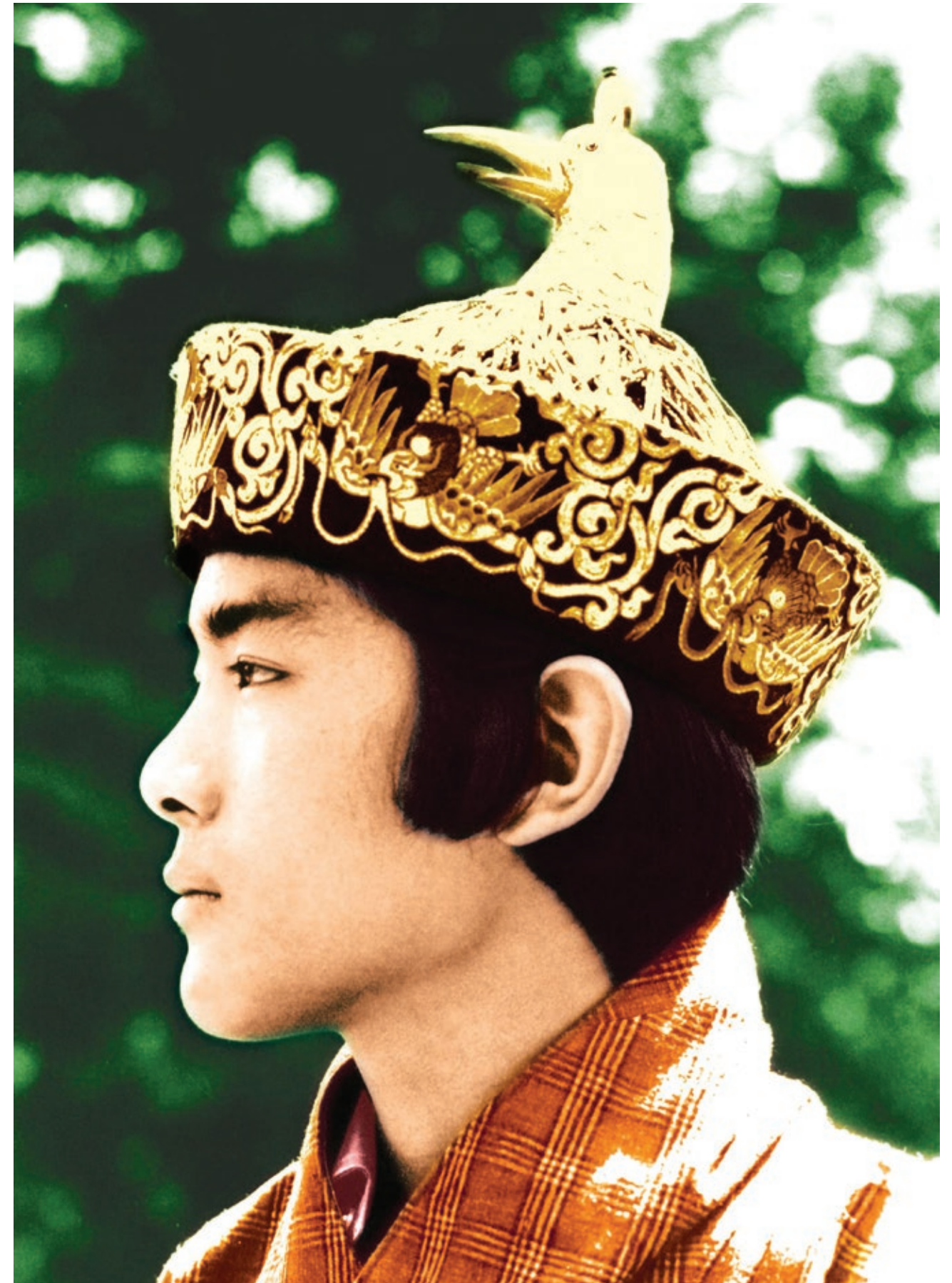
The Bhutan His Majesty inherited straddled two worlds. The Third King had begun to open the kingdom to modernity, building roads, schools, hospitals. But its future was uncertain. Modernization risked unraveling traditions, and Bhutan’s sovereignty was fragile, caught between giants India and China.

His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck carried the reforms forward with a steady hand, determined to preserve Bhutan’s independence while nurturing its people’s wellbeing. His philosophy crystallized around the triad of Tsa-Wa-Sum (King, Country, and People). Ruler and subjects were bound by reciprocal duty, their shared loyalty forming the essence of Bhutanese nationhood.

Yet, unlike monarchs elsewhere, the Fourth King was skeptical of absolute power. He believed no leader could, or should, decide the destiny of a people alone. That conviction would eventually lead him to cede power in a way almost unthinkable in world history, by voluntarily giving up his throne and ushering in parliamentary democracy.

The Birth of Gross National Happiness

Perhaps his most enduring gift is a development philosophy that challenged global orthodoxy. In the



In the Western canon, Plato’s notion of a philosopher king has long been a subject of debate—admired as an ideal of wisdom and justice, dismissed as an impossibility. Yet far from the amphitheaters of Athens, in a Himalayan kingdom still largely hidden from the world when Plato’s words first echoed, Bhutan found its own embodiment of that idea.

His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, reigned for 34 years before abdicating in 2006. His reign is remembered not only for modernizing Bhutan and strengthening its sovereignty, but for doing so with a rare blend of compassion and pragmatism. To many Bhutanese, he is more than a monarch - he is the guardian of their identity, the architect of their democracy, and, in spirit, their philosopher king.

A King of Prophecy

The Fourth King’s story begins in prophecy. In the 18th century, the Buddhist master Tertön Drukdra Dorji foretold that a prince of uncommon virtue would be born



1970s, as growth economies chased GDP, the young monarch posed a radical question: Shouldn't the goal of development be happiness?

Thus was born Gross National Happiness, or GNH, a framework that sought balance between material progress and spiritual, cultural, and environmental wellbeing. In a small kingdom with limited resources, His Majesty reasoned, prosperity could not come at the expense of identity, ecology, or future generations.

GNH became more than Bhutan's guiding star; it was soon studied in universities, cited in UN debates, and invoked by leaders searching for alternatives to conventional development models. For Bhutan, it brought global recognition, and a moral voice disproportionate to its size.

A Monarch Who Chose Democracy

On December 17, 2005, during the National Day celebrations, the King stunned his subjects with a double announcement: he would abdicate in favor of his son, and Bhutan would transition to parliamentary democracy.

The people were bewildered. Many believed it was too soon. But the King had been preparing the ground for decades—decentralizing power to districts, empowering village councils, and even drafting a Constitution in 2001.

In 2008, as Bhutanese queued at polling stations for

the first time, democracy arrived not through revolution or bloodshed but through a monarch's vision of shared responsibility. It was, as His Majesty had long envisioned, the people deciding their own future.

The Legacy

Today, nearly two decades after his abdication, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck lives in quiet retirement. But his imprint is everywhere - etched into Bhutan's Constitution, embodied in its democratic institutions, and alive in the philosophy of Gross National Happiness.

To many Bhutanese, His Majesty remains more than their Fourth Druk Gyalpo. He is the King who gave them democracy without demanding it, prosperity without excess, and an identity that balances tradition with modernity. Plato's philosopher king was an ideal. In Bhutan, cloistered among the Himalayas, it became a lived reality.



KINLEY TSHERING

An award-winning journalist, screenwriter and filmmaker, he has worked as editor for several newspapers in Bhutan. Currently, he is the editor of this inflight magazine. He also serves as the Managing Editor of Kuensel, Bhutan's national newspaper.



Bhutan Telecom

On this profoundly significant occasion of the 70th Birth Anniversary of His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, we offer our deepest respect, admiration, and heartfelt gratitude.

His Majesty's reign stands as a remarkable chapter in Bhutan's history—defined by visionary leadership, selfless service, and extraordinary foresight. As the architect of Gross National Happiness, His Majesty redefined the meaning of development, placing the well-being of people and the preservation of culture and environment at the heart of national policy.

May the values he upheld and instilled continue to illuminate the path for the present and future generations.

May His Majesty be blessed with continued health, everlasting happiness, and long life.

Happy 70th Birth Anniversary, Your Majesty!

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How I Met the King

In 1998, I attended the Thimphu Festival dressed like a brocade wedding cake. My heavy silk on silk tego gleamed, and rustled with every breath. My kira was exquisitely woven and wildly colorful, and my high heels clicked against stone like a metronome. I was magnificent. I was festival-ready. I was absolutely, catastrophically unprepared for what was coming.

After the morning's festivities at Tashichhodzong, I decided to stroll into town and pretend I belonged among the graceful Bhutanese women who managed to look effortless in their kiras, while I felt like I was wearing a very

expensive tapestry.

That's when Marianne appeared.

She said she'd recently relocated from Zhemgang with her partner, packing what appeared to be their entire earthly existence in their Land Cruiser. "Come see our new place in Serbithang!" she said.

Now, any sensible person would have asked follow-up questions. *How far is it? Do you have room?* But I was feeling magnanimous in my festival finery, so I chirped, "Sure!"

The first warning sign should have been her green Land Cruiser. It looked like a shipping container that had mated

with a four-wheel drive. Boxes towered in every conceivable space—the dashboard, the floors, tied to the roof, the passenger seat even.

"I think there's no room," I said, stating what seemed blindingly obvious.

Marianne waved this off with the breezy confidence of someone who would be sitting in the driver's seat. "There's a spot in the back!"

She flung open the rear door, revealing what I can only describe as a human-sized mail slot. A two-foot by six-foot sliver of space carved out between towers of boxes like some sort of feng shui nightmare on the right side of the vehicle.

"Just twenty minutes," she promised. "We'll unload at the house, and then you can have tea and a real seat on the way back."

And here's where my story takes a turn toward the absurd. Because instead of politely declining—like any per-

son with functioning survival instincts would do—I heard myself saying, "Well, alright then."

What followed was a contortion act that would have impressed circus performers. I hoisted myself into the Land Cruiser like I was boarding a space capsule, arms stretched overhead, wriggling and squirming until I achieved what I can only call "Superman pose"—if Superman had been wearing traditional Bhutanese dress and questioning his life choices.

There I was: squashed up against the side window on my hip, arms pinned above my head like I was permanently surrendering to gravity. From the outside, I must have looked like the world's most overdressed crash test dummy.

We lurched into motion, Marianne chattering away in the front seat while I tried to breathe without wrinkling my silk and wondered if this was how I would die—suffocated by cardboard boxes while wearing my best festival outfit.

Then we turned off the main road toward Serbithang,

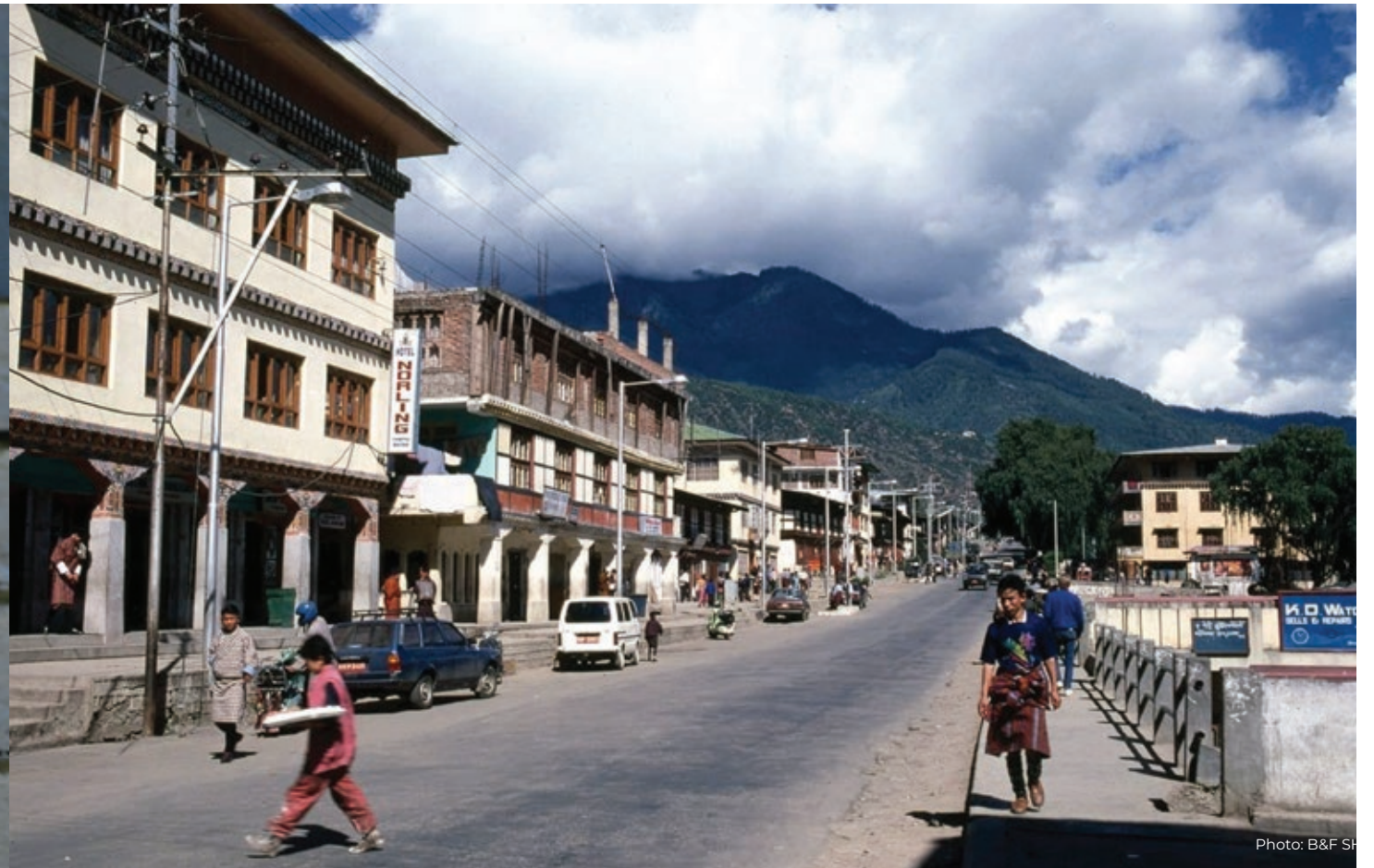


Photo: B&F SH



climbing slightly above the highway on the dirt road. That's when I saw it.

The pilot car.

A jeep with a red light flashing on its roof, a beacon of urgency. My blood turned to ice water. Everyone in Bhutan knew what that meant.

His Majesty the King was on the road.

What happened next unfolded in that peculiar slow-motion clarity that accompanies life's most mortifying moments. Here came the royal Land Cruiser, sleek and dignified, everything our cardboard-encrusted vehicle was not. Through the windows, I could see His Majesty in the passenger seat, leaning toward his driver, gesturing animatedly as he spoke.

And then—horror of horrors—he looked up. His hands froze in midair. His mouth open.

He looked directly at me.

Me. The human cargo. The festival-dressed crash dummy. The foreign woman doing an involuntary Superman impression while trapped in a moving storage unit.

His eyes locked onto mine through the glass, and I watched his expression shift from casual interest to complete bewilderment. I could only imagine his thoughts: "Is that... is that a person? What are these crazy foreigners up to?"

For one eternal moment, the King of Bhutan and I stared at each other across the cosmic divide between royal

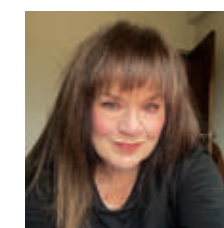
dignity and absolute ridiculousness. The convoy swept past, leaving me with the most mortifying encounter of my life.

Marianne had to pull over. She was laughing so hard she could barely see the road, gasping and wheezing like she was having some sort of breakdown.

"Linda!" she managed between fits of hysteria. "You absolutely *must* write this down! And you have to call it—"How I Met the King!"

Had I not been physically immobilized by boxes and silk, I would have been doubled over myself. Instead, I lay there like the well-dressed sardine I was, laughing hysterically, contemplating the cosmic joke that had just unfolded.

To this day I wonder what His Majesty thought. I suspect he seriously questioned the decision to open his country to foreigners, but then forgot about it and returned to the weighty business of running a kingdom—filing away yet another inexplicable expatriate encounter under *Things That Make No Sense But Somehow Happened Anyway*.



LINDA LEAMING

She is the author of the best sellers, *MARRIED TO BHUTAN* and *A FIELD GUIDE TO HAPPINESS*. Her third book about Bhutan, *NO RIGHT ANGLES*, is forthcoming. She lives in Thimphu with her husband, Phurba Namgay, a painter.



Leadership Rooted in Buddhist Wisdom

His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck at 70



Buddhism teaches that life is an illusion — not in the sense that it doesn't exist, but that it lacks a fixed, independent reality. Everything is a temporary arrangement shaped by perception. What one person in modern society identifies as a table might be used as a raft by someone in an Amazonian village, while a cat would likely treat it as a bed. Yet even within this illusion, we live, love, fear, hope, suffer, and die.

Like a mother responding with compassion to her child in a nightmare, we cannot dismiss pain simply because it isn't ultimately real. The child's experience is valid. Our innate basic goodness compels us to respond to suffering — even when it arises from an illusion. We can uphold an understanding of the ultimate nature of reality — that all things are interconnected, ever-changing, and devoid of fixed identity — while still acting with care in the relative world.

Yet I know of no world leader in modern times who has embodied this insight. Instead, they construct systems rooted in permanence and separation, where individuals and institutions fiercely defend what they claim as “mine”.

Such systems function like a body in which each organ acts only for itself: the heart hoards blood, the kidneys withhold fluids, and no part sustains the whole. The result is dysfunction. The system inflames, starves, becomes toxic, and ultimately collapses — not from lack of effort, but from lack of unity.

This is the trajectory the world now follows. When competition replaces cooperation and self-interest is mistaken for strength, social, economic, and ecological systems begin to break down. The illusion of separateness becomes not merely a misunderstanding, but a root cause of global instability. The solution is not more control or division, but a system grounded in Buddhist wisdom — one that recognizes the true nature of reality.

His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the Fourth King of Bhutan, offered a visionary model rooted in that wisdom, drawing inspiration from a 1629 legal code that declared the purpose of government is to create happiness for its people — an unusually progressive



concept, especially when contrasted with the state of Europe at the time, marked by religious conflict and political fragmentation.

This model would later become known as Gross National Happiness (GNH), introduced in the 1970s not long after His Majesty ascended the throne at just 16 years old — an extraordinary vision for someone so young. While most teenagers are still finding their footing, Bhutan's young monarch was already reshaping national policy to prioritize the well-being of citizens, the strength of communities, and the long-term health of the environment.

This holistic philosophy was not just a lofty ideal — it had practical applications that shaped Bhutan's policies in education, healthcare, infrastructure, and environmental stewardship. In doing so, GNH rejected dominant development strategies of the day that fostered competition, inequality, and environmental degradation, instead drawing on Buddhist wisdom to promote spiritual, ecological, and communal well-being.

These principles guided Bhutan through careful modernization, allowing progress to unfold without compromising cultural identity or social cohesion. Today, GNH continues to serve as the nation's compass and offers a compelling alternative for societies seeking balance between growth and genuine fulfillment.

In 2006, His Majesty The Fourth King voluntarily abdicated the throne to initiate Bhutan's transition to democracy. Despite widespread public support for him to continue, he stepped aside — quietly, decisively, and without drama. His decision reflected not only the Buddhist understanding of impermanence but also a rare kind of leadership: one rooted in humility, foresight, and trust in the next generation.

This stood in stark contrast to the global norm, where many leaders cling to power long past their time, often at the cost of economic stability, social cohesion, and institutional integrity. His Majesty's abdication was not a retreat — it was a deliberate act of nation-building.

Yet the visionary ideals of Gross National Happiness did not end with his reign. They continue to shape Bhutan's future through initiatives like the Gelephu Mindfulness City — a Special Administrative Region envisioned as a new economic hub, spearheaded by his son and the current monarch. Gelephu will integrate sustainable architecture, abundant green space, and carbon-neutral infrastructure.

On a personal note, I remember receiving a call during the pandemic lockdown. His Majesty the Fourth king's secretariat had been instructed to send me a

crate of oranges. At a time when fresh fruit was scarce and vitamins were desperately needed, it was a very appropriate and welcome gesture. Following protocol, the box was left at the gate, and I was able to share the fruit with friends and neighbors.

This was actually my second interaction with His Majesty. The first occurred in December 2015, following the National Day ceremonies in Paro. A lunch had been arranged for high-ranking and noble dignitaries — I am still not sure why I was invited — and I had the honor of sharing a table with His Majesty.

In my life, I have rarely been deeply moved by a person, and when I have, it has always been when sitting at the feet of accomplished Buddhist masters. Yet I felt a similar sense of awe in His Majesty's presence — not because of the formality of the occasion, but because of the authenticity and quiet strength he embodied. The impression stayed with me for a long time.

As His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck marks his 70th birthday, Bhutan reflects on a legacy deeply shaped by Buddhist wisdom. He guided the kingdom into modernity while preserving its unique Vajrayana identity, gifted the nation with democracy, and offered the world a development model rooted in compassion, balance, and interdependence.

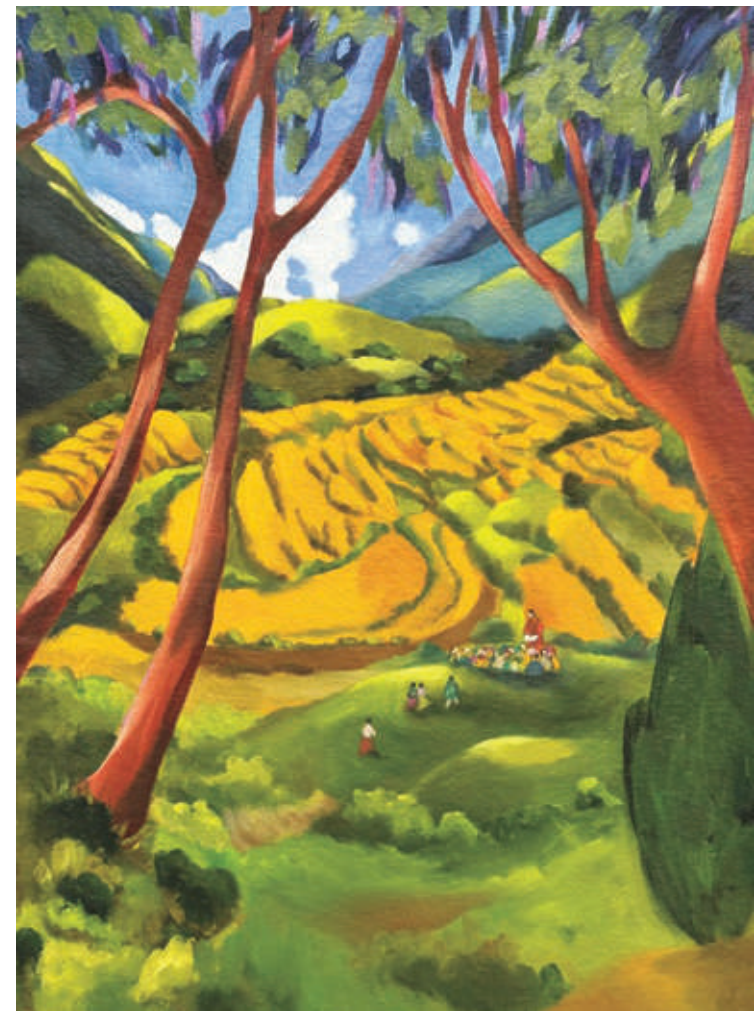
GNH has since been recognized by institutions like the UN as a potential framework for global development and has provided the foundational principles for Lhomon Education, a system introduced in Samdrup Jongkhar to educate more connected, involved lifelong learners — grounded in Bhutan's ancient wisdom traditions, principles, and practices.

For these reasons, His Majesty, the Great Fourth, will likely be remembered above all as a Dharma King — not merely for preserving Buddhist texts and institutions, though that too was part of his role, but for embodying its principles and applying them through policy and guidance. He created the conditions for Bhutanese to live in harmony and peace, offering a rare example of leadership grounded in wisdom, service, and the understanding that real power lies in letting go.



SHENPHEN ZANGPO

He was born in Swansea, UK, but spent more than 28 years practicing and studying Buddhism in Taiwan and Japan, and around 15 years working with substance abusers in Bhutan, teaching meditation and organizing drug outreach programmes. Currently, he is engaged in activities that present the traditional wisdom of the Dharma to the youth of Bhutan in a modern and relevant way.



Echoes of a Kingdom

WHERE ANCIENT PALACE WALLS MEET CONTEMPORARY ART

How a Croatian-born, New York-based painter found a “home of the heart” in Bhutan, creating a tribute of seventy works for the Fourth Druk Gyalpo inside the country’s first royal palace.

When you land in Bhutan, you quickly sense you are entering a country unlike any other. Steeped in tradition, shaped by Vajrayana Buddhist values, and guided by a philosophy of Gross National Happiness, Bhutan holds a unique balance between heritage and forward vision. It is here, in Bumthang’s Wangduechhoeing Palace—the first royal palace of Bhutan and birthplace of its monarchy—that visitors this autumn will find something equally unique: *Echoes of a Kingdom*, the first solo exhibition of

contemporary art by a Western artist ever presented in Bhutan. The artist, Tatjana Krizmanic, was born in Croatia, built her career in the United States, and is now based in New York City. Her colorful canvases have been shown internationally, yet it is Bhutan that she calls her “home of the heart.” For the past year, she has devoted herself to creating a body of seventy works—large-scale oils, delicate watercolors, and hand-painted linocut prints—dedicated to His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, Jigme

Singye Wangchuck, on the occasion of his 70th birth anniversary. Krizmanic painted the *Echoes of a Kingdom* collection in under a year, working with remarkable focus and discipline. To complete the series, she set aside three months in retreat, spending mornings in meditation and afternoons and evenings painting. “That retreat time was essential,” she explains. “It allowed me to stay true and wholehearted.”

A Meeting of Worlds

For visitors new to Bhutan, the exhibition offers a vivid introduction to the kingdom’s spirit. The four themes—environmental stewardship, cultural preservation, significant moments of the Fourth King’s reign, and Bhutan’s spiritual traditions—serve as a guide to understanding what makes Bhutan so extraordinary. Yet they are expressed through the hand of a contemporary painter whose roots lie in European impressionism and whose career has been shaped by decades of living in America.

This meeting of cultures is what makes *Echoes of a Kingdom* so striking. As Krizmanic explains, “Bhutan’s values and my own path as a painter and Vajrayana Buddhist

practitioner seemed to dovetail perfectly. That is why Bhutan feels to me like home.”

“Tatjana’s work does more than depict our values; it allows us to feel them and to stand inside the spaces where memory and presence touch. For me, curating this exhibit was not about explaining but about holding those moments open so others might step into them too.” — Lhatso Sangay, Senior Curator, Wangduechhoeing Palace Museum

Having studied with her teacher, Dzigar Kongtrul Rinpoche, for more than 35 years, Krizmanic brings a rare sensitivity to Bhutan’s last Vajrayana kingdom. “The paintings poured straight from my heart,” she says. “They are prayers in color and light, offerings of gratitude for a king whose vision continues to shape Bhutan and inspire the world.”

The Palace and Its Living History

To step into Wangduechhoeing Palace is to step into history. Built in the 1850s by Trongsa Penlop Jigme Namgyel, father of the first Druk Gyalpo, the palace later became the childhood home of Bhutan’s monarchy.

Carefully restored, it now serves as a museum dedicated to preserving Bhutan’s heritage and sharing it with the world.

Within its ancient walls, the juxtaposition of contemporary canvases and centuries-old architecture creates a harmony that feels uniquely Bhutanese: a bridge between past and future, tradition and innovation. For travelers, this rare fusion offers a chance to experience the living culture of Bhutan in an entirely new way.

Inspiring the Next Generation

Krizmanic’s time in Bhutan has not been limited to palace halls. Shortly after the opening, she led workshops for students of Jakar High School in Bumthang and the Druk Gyalpo Institute – Royal Academy in Paro. Her goal: to encourage Bhutanese youth to explore their own creative expression.

“Art is not a luxury,” she says. “It is a way of thinking, of problem-solving, of dreaming. The future of Bhutan is in the hands of its young people, and their voices will shape how Bhutan’s values engage with the wider world.”

Why This Matters

For travelers, Echoes of a Kingdom offers more than an art show. It is a window into the Bhutanese ethos—its reverence for environment and culture, its emphasis on compassion and well-being, and its openness to exchange with the world. Krizmanic believes Bhutan has a significant role to play globally, sharing its distinctive

approach to development and happiness while nurturing progress and well-being within its own borders.

Her exhibition reflects that vision. It is both a tribute to Bhutan’s Fourth King and an invitation for visitors to witness how art can cross cultures, bridging continents and traditions in a way that feels organic and alive.

“Tatjana Krizmanic’s works not only graced our galleries but touched the hearts of everyone who visited, making our first collaborative exhibition at the Palace a truly memorable occasion,” said Dr. Kuenga Lhendup, Executive Director of the Wangduechhoeling Palace Museum.

A Visit Worth Making

If your journey takes you to Bumthang, set aside time to visit Wangduechhoeling Palace. Walk its restored courtyards, breathe in the history of the Bhutanese monarchy, and then step into the gallery where contemporary art meets timeless tradition.

There you will find Echoes of a Kingdom—seventy luminous works that embody a rare cultural dialogue: a Croatian-born, New York-based artist offering her heart to Bhutan, and Bhutan welcoming that offering within the walls of its first royal palace.

For Krizmanic, the words that best describe Bhutan are profound, joyful, and authentic. Visitors may find themselves echoing those same words as they leave the palace—carrying with them a glimpse of Bhutan’s enduring spirit.



On the auspicious occasion of the 70th Birth Anniversary of our benevolent Fourth Druk Gyalpo Jigme Singye Wangchuck, Punakha Dzongkhag offers our heartfelt gratitude and prayers for Your Majesty's long life, good health and happiness.

PUNAKHA DZONGKHAG

VISIT WANGDUECHHOELING PALACE MUSEUM

Location: Jakar, Bumthang Valley – The first royal palace of Bhutan, now a restored museum.

On view: Echoes of a Kingdom — 70 works by Tatjana Krizmanic, a tribute to His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo.

Hours: Daily, 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM (closed on government holidays).

The Warrior King of the Thunder Dragon



In the winter of 2003, as the world watched distant wars fought with overwhelming force, a different kind of warrior walked through the dense, subtropical forests of southern Bhutan. He wore not the crown of a monarch, but the simple uniform of a soldier. He carried not a scepter, but the heavy responsibility of a nation's survival. At the head of a column of his men, leading them on foot into uncertain territory, was His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the Fourth King of Bhutan.

This image, so contrary to the modern conception of kingship, is perhaps the most defining portrait of Bhutan's Great Fourth. He was a king who ruled from the hearts of his people, a philosopher who dared to measure progress

in happiness, and when the moment demanded, a warrior who would place himself at the forefront of danger to protect the sanctuary he had so carefully nurtured. His story is not just the history of a nation; it is an enduring lesson in guardianship.

The Trial by Fire

In the global imagination, Bhutan often appears as a land of serene monasteries and timeless peace, a perception carefully cultivated and fiercely protected. But in the late 1990s, this peace was under grave threat. Three militant groups from across the border had established thirty illegal camps deep within Bhutan's southern jungles, using the kingdom's territory to launch attacks elsewhere and threatening the nation's security and sovereignty.

For eight long years, from 1995 to 2003, His Majesty pursued a path of peace, a testament to his Buddhist principles. He engaged in six years of painstaking dialogue, personally trekking at great risk to meet the militant leaders in their jungle hideouts, urging them to leave the kingdom peacefully. His Majesty had studied his adversaries, their terrain, and their tactics, walking the very ground they occupied. But when every peaceful overture failed, the King, as the supreme commander of the armed forces, was left with no other choice.

What followed was not a conventional war. It was an operation rooted in a philosophy uniquely Bhutanese. Days before the conflict, the senior monk Yangbi Lopen addressed the soldiers, reminding them of their true identity: "You are first a Buddhist and then a soldier". The objective was not annihilation, but restoration; not to conquer, but to cleanse. The King's strategy, born from his intimate knowledge of the camps, was to use the army's mortars not as instruments of pure destruction, but to create a precise and overwhelming barrage designed to warn, frighten, and disperse the militants with minimal bloodshed, giving them time to flee.

On December 15, 2003, His Majesty led the 6,736 soldiers of the Royal Bhutan Army from the front. The operation was swift and decisive. Within two days, all thirty camps were dismantled, and the threat to Bhutan's sovereignty was eliminated. Yet, in the aftermath, there were no victory parades, no triumphant declarations. Instead, the kingdom turned to prayer. Butter lamps were lit in monasteries across the nation, and the captured weapons were hung in temples, not as trophies of war,

but as symbols of surrendered violence, a prayer that such a necessity might never arise again. His Majesty's first instinct was not to celebrate a victory, but to heal the spiritual fabric of the land.

The Wars Fought Without Weapons

This literal trial by fire revealed the King's courage, but his greatest battles were fought not on the fields of conflict, but in the minds of men and the policies of nations. He was a warrior in a far broader, more profound sense, defending Bhutan from the unseen forces that have eroded so many other cultures in the modern age.

His most legendary act of defense was the philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH). In a world marching to the drumbeat of Gross Domestic Product, His Majesty declared that true progress must be measured not in the accumulation of wealth, but in the well-being and happiness of the people. GNH became his shield against the onslaught of unchecked consumerism and soulless development. It was a warrior's promise to his people: we will modernize, but we will not sacrifice our soul. This philosophy, once seen as a curious Himalayan ideal, has since inspired nations and leaders across the globe, a testament to its enduring wisdom.

His Majesty also waged a quiet, brilliant war to protect Bhutan's sovereignty on the world stage. Ascending the throne at just sixteen, he steered his small, landlocked nation through the complex currents of regional and global geopolitics with the skill of a master strategist. He embraced a policy of non-alignment, joining the Non-Aligned Movement and attending its fifth summit in Sri





Lanka as early as 1976. He cultivated deep friendships, particularly with India, while carefully asserting Bhutan's status as a sovereign, independent nation. Under his leadership, Bhutan became a respected voice of principle, a nation whose integrity was its greatest currency.

Perhaps most visibly to visitors today, he was a warrior for the environment. Long before climate change became a global crisis, His Majesty understood that Bhutan's pristine natural world was its most sacred inheritance. He enshrined environmental protection into the heart of national policy, culminating in a constitutional mandate that Bhutan must maintain a minimum of sixty percent of its land under forest cover for all time. This visionary act of stewardship has earned him the world's highest environmental honors, including the inaugural "Champion of the Earth" award from the United Nations.

The Enduring Legacy

The legacy of this warrior king is not a story confined to the pages of history; it is a living reality, woven into the very fabric of Bhutanese life. To witness the kingdom's mountains, cloaked in emerald forests that stretch to the horizon, is to see the victory of the environmental warrior. His Majesty enshrined environmental protection into the heart of national policy, culminating in a constitutional mandate that Bhutan must maintain a minimum of sixty percent of its land under forest cover for all time. This green shield is the breathing testament to his foresight.

In the gentle rhythm of village life, where ancient traditions and modern aspirations coexist in a quiet balance, one feels the harmony crafted by the philosopher-warrior

of Gross National Happiness. This philosophy was his defense against the erosion of culture, a promise that the nation's soul would always be its most valued treasure. The palpable sense of security and unwavering cultural pride that permeates the kingdom is the invisible fortress built by the guardian-warrior who defended its sovereignty on the world's stage.

The ultimate act of a warrior is knowing that a battle well fought is one that creates a lasting peace. For His Majesty, this meant creating a nation that would no longer need him to be its sole defender. He began the process of decentralization, patiently teaching his people the art of self-governance. His reign was a thirty-four-year lesson in national responsibility, preparing his people to become the stewards of their own destiny.

His final act as a warrior king was his most profound: in 2008, at the height of his reign, he voluntarily abdicated the throne, ushering in democracy and placing the future of the kingdom securely in the hands of his people. It was the quiet triumph of a leader who had fought not for a crown, but for a country. He had not just won a war; he had ensured peace for generations to come. The warrior had finally sheathed his sword, his kingdom safe, his legacy immortal.



KHENRAB NIMA

He is a law student and published author who explores stories at the intersection of tradition and progress. With experience at the Prime Minister's Office, he has gained a front-row view of Bhutan's transformation. His writings in national journals and newspapers reflect his passion for understanding and capturing the nation's evolving journey.

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CordyPLUS helps to improve skin and hair radiance and overall health.



Russian Café and Bakery Brusnika



Brusnika, a charming café with a beautiful menu, is a testament to the passion of its owners, Tashi and Natalia.

Inspired by the wonderful bakeries and cuisines of their homelands, Bhutan and Russia, Tashi and Natalia realized the need for organic Artisan type breads in Bhutan.

The café had humble beginnings, with Natalia practicing a fusion of Russian style pastries using local grains, including Bhutan's favourite grain, rice! She started to bake for family and friends, and soon dreamed of opening her own bakery.

When Natalia and Tashi found a beautiful place with the most amazing view in town, Russian Cafe and Bakery Brusnika was born. Natalia trained Bhutanese ladies how to bake bread, cakes, and pastries. Now, the cafe and bakery serves a charming menu of continental cuisine infused with Russian flavors.

The bread and pastries are a mix of Russian and German, a simple homage to the Bhutanese-Russian family's personal history. Natalia was born and brought up in Russia, and the couple spent 10 years in Germany.

The concept of food at Brusnika is simple: eat local, eat healthy. The café uses local milk and butter, homemade cheese, jams by Brusnika, organic vegetables and fruits, and avoids processed food as much as possible.

Brusnika is more than just a café; it is a place where people can come together to enjoy delicious food, stunning views, and the warmth of Russian-Bhutanese hospitality.

Come and enjoy healthy, homemade food and incredible views at Brusnika!

Scan for Directions!



 brusnika_thimphu

 +97517714797

Open hours: 8AM to 7PM
Closed on Mondays

Average bill for coffee and cakes: \$5
Average bill for Breakfast: \$8
Average bill for lunch: \$15

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How Bhutan's Democracy Was Born

The Vision of the Fourth Druk Gyalpo

When democracy swept through nations as a force of revolution, Bhutan's own democratic journey unfolded like a quiet evolution — deliberate, thoughtful, and deeply rooted in the country's values of unity, peace, and Gross National Happiness (GNH).

Bhutan's democracy was not born out of protest or political upheaval. It was envisioned, nurtured, and gifted to the people by His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the Father of Bhutan's Democracy and the philosopher of Gross National Happiness.

His Majesty believed that true progress must come from within — that democracy must emerge from trust, understanding, and maturity of the people. “In the womb of a strong and peaceful monarchy, we have begun to nurture the hopes of a vibrant democracy,” His Majesty once said.

The Beginning of a Democratic Vision

On September 4, 2001, His Majesty convened the Council of Ministers, the Chief Justice of Bhutan, and members of the Royal Advisory Council to discuss a historic decision — the drafting of a written Constitution for the Kingdom of Bhutan.

It was not an abrupt shift in governance, but rather the culmination of decades of gradual decentralization and political empowerment that His Majesty had been preparing the nation for. His Majesty commanded the drafting of ten Constitutional Principles to serve as the moral and legal foundation of the new system.

Just a few weeks later, on September 22, 2001, orders were issued for the nomination and election of members to form the Constitution Drafting Committee. The process was formally inaugurated on November 30, 2001, with the sacred Zhugdrel Phuensum Tsokpai Tendrel



ceremony in the Throne Room — marking the birth of Bhutan's first written Constitution.

Evolution, Not Revolution

As Lyonpo Sonam Tobgye, the former Chief Justice and Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee, often recalls, Bhutan's democracy was “evolutionary, not revolutionary.”

Long before democracy was formally introduced, Bhutan had been steadily sowing the seeds of public participation.



In 1953, His Majesty the Third Druk Gyalpo established the National Assembly, encouraging political consciousness among citizens.

In 1968, His Majesty the Third King declared that “the present monarchical form of government is changed to that of a constitutional monarchy,” introducing a Council of Ministers headed by the Paro Penlop, Dasho Namgyal Wangchuk.

Even India's then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, had once remarked to the young King:

“We always support democracy, but it has to be gradual — for the sake of Bhutan's safety, especially in keeping with its emerging new personality.”

His Majesty's philosophy echoed this wisdom — democracy should not be imposed but nurtured through understanding and readiness.

The People's King and His Vision for Empowerment

When His Majesty ascended the Golden Throne in 1972, he was only sixteen. Yet even then, he displayed extraordinary foresight. Speaking to the world press that same year, he said Bhutan would “slowly and gradually develop into a constitutional monarchy.”

This vision guided every reform that followed.

In 1981, His Majesty launched a policy of decentralization, establishing Dzongkhag Yargay Tshogchungs (District Development Committees).

In 1991, the system expanded to include Gewog Yargay Tshogchungs (Block Development Committees), giving people a stronger voice in governance.

By 1998, His Majesty made another unprecedented move — devolving full executive power to an elected

Council of Ministers. In his address to the National Assembly, he said:

“Our country must always have a system of government that enjoys the mandate of the people, provides clean and efficient governance, and safeguards our national interests and security.”

That same year, His Majesty relinquished his role as Head of Government — a gesture that astonished the world. It was perhaps the most selfless political reform in modern history: a monarch voluntarily transferring power to his people.

Drafting the Constitution: The Blueprint for Democracy

Under His Majesty's guidance, the Constitution Drafting Committee began its meticulous work in late 2001. The drafting process was rooted in consultation, reflection, and collective wisdom.

The document embodied Bhutan's values — monarchy, democracy, and religion — in perfect harmony. The Constitution, as envisioned by His Majesty, was not just a legal framework but a moral compass, ensuring that governance would always align with the spirit of Gross National Happiness.

A King's Final Gift Before Transition

On December 17, 2005, in the remote district of Trashi-yangtse, His Majesty made a profound announcement — he would abdicate the throne in favor of the Chhoe-tse Penlop, His Royal Highness Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, before 2008.

“It is necessary and important for a King to gain as



much experience as possible to serve his country to his fullest capacity,” His Majesty told a stunned gathering.

Then, in December 2006, His Majesty made an announcement that moved the nation to tears. In his royal decree of abdication, he said:

“As I had announced during the National Day celebrations last year about my abdication, and also briefed the Lhengye Zhungtshog on this decision, the time has now come for me to hand over my responsibilities to Trongsa Penlop Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck. While we prepare ourselves for parliamentary democracy in 2008, we must all pledge with our body, speech and mind to be unwavering and steadfast in our efforts to strengthen the sovereignty and security of Bhutan, to secure the blessings of liberty, ensure justice and peace in our country, and enhance the unity, happiness and well-being of our people for all time to come... As I hand over my responsibilities to my son, I repose my full faith and belief in the people of Bhutan to look after the future of our nation, for it is the Bhutanese people who are the true custodians of our tradition and culture and the ultimate guardians of the security, sovereignty and continued well-being of our country.”

It was an act of profound humility and confidence in his people—a King relinquishing power to empower his nation.

Two years later, Bhutan held its first parliamentary elections — peaceful, dignified, and exemplary. The transition from monarchy to democracy was complete.

A Democracy of the Heart

His Majesty the Fifth Druk Gyalpo, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, has since nurtured this democratic vision into maturity. In his speeches, he has described three

kinds of democracies: failed, struggling, and learning. Bhutan, he says, is a “learning democracy” — one that grows from strength to strength.

“Democracy provides freedom, a mechanism to ensure justice, and an awakening of our souls to protect the rights of others,” His Majesty has reminded the nation time and again.

His Majesty’s dream is of a democracy that is “clean, healthy, responsible, effective, and vibrant” — a system that embodies the nation’s unique values of compassion, balance, and collective happiness.

Legacy of a Visionary Monarch

Bhutan’s journey to democracy stands unparalleled in history — not as a product of protest, but as a gift of wisdom. His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck proved that true leadership lies not in power retained, but in power shared.

As Lyonpo Sonam Tobgye once reflected, “His Majesty gave democracy to the people not because they demanded it, but because he believed they were ready for it.”

Today, as Bhutan continues to strengthen its democratic foundations, the guiding light remains the same — the selfless vision of a King who led his nation from tradition to transformation, and from monarchy to democracy, with peace as his compass and happiness as his goal.



RINZIN WANGCHUK

The writer is an experienced journalist who has been following His Majesty the Fourth King’s visits since the early 1990s while working with Kuensel. He covered consultation meetings on the draft Constitution across 13 districts and reported on the 2005 National Day celebrations in Trashiyangtse.

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WITH GRATITUDE

The Tourism Industry of Bhutan
joins the nation
in offering
our prayers to our
Great Fourth King
Jigme Singye Wangchuck
in celebrating the 70th
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Enhancing Climate Resilience in Bhutan
Department of Human Settlement, Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport



On the occasion of the 70th Birthday of His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the Department of Human Settlement, Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport joins the nation in extending our heartfelt wishes for His Majesty's long life, good health, and enduring happiness.



OUR INITIATIVES TO STRENGTHEN CLIMATE RESILIENCE UNDER THE ECRUL PROJECT

1. Developing integrated policy and institutional frameworks for coordinated cross-sectoral action,
2. Promoting green buildings and sustainable tools,
3. Implementing climate-resilient infrastructure
4. Greening urban parks and river corridors,
5. Enhancing water security through digitization and treatment improvements,
6. Empowering youth, women, and entrepreneurs via nature-based solutions training,
7. Strengthening education and capacity-building for urban planning and design using nature-based solutions

Department of Human Settlement

Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport



Our Development Partners



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On the joyous occasion of the 70th Birth Anniversary of our beloved Fourth Druk Gyalpo Jigme Singye Wangchuck, Mountain Cafe Family joins the Nation in offering our deepest respects, hearty felicitations and prayers for His Majesty's prosperous life and good health.



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Drukair

History Of Bhutan's National Airline

Dedicated to His Majesty The Great Fourth

The story of Bhutan's national airline begins in 1968, when His Majesty the Third Druk Gyalpo sent Prince Namgyal Wangchuck to New York to explore the possibility of purchasing an aircraft. Accompanied by Kinley Wangdi, the Prince was welcomed and escorted by Tsering Wangyal Shakabpa (1940–1992), son of a Tibetan statesman and historian. At the time, Shakabpa was working with Pan American World Airways, commonly known as Pan Am.

In New York, the Bhutanese delegation was generously hosted by Alvin P. Adams (1906–1996) and his son,

Nathan Adams. A Yale alumnus and then Vice President of Pan Am, Alvin was a towering figure in the world of aviation, while his son served as a Senior Editor at Reader's Digest. Adams's illustrious career was vividly chronicled in his 1996 New York Times obituary, which recounted his remarkable ascent: The Wall Street Journal's first aviation specialist at 21, an airline president at 29, and a Pan Am executive by 45. One account aptly observed that Adams seemed to embody the spirit of aviation itself.

In 1963, American inventor and entrepreneur William Powell Lear launched the first mass-produced business

jets. Four years later, Gates Rubber Company acquired the company, and Harry Benjamin Combs (1913–2003) was appointed its new president.

Shortly after, Combs sought to showcase the business jet to a potential international client: the Prince of Bhutan. A special demonstration flight was arranged in Denver, Colorado. According to Norzin Tsarong Shakabpa—wife of T.W. Shakabpa and the top hostess at New York's exclusive Pan Am Club, who was present for the event—Combs was eager to impress his royal guest. However, the pilot performed a series of aggressive manoeuvres that left the prince with a headache.

While the Learjet was considered for Bhutan's proposed airline, it was found unsuitable for the country's demanding conditions: high altitude, a short airstrip, and limited passenger capacity.

Despite the unsuccessful demonstration, the connection with Alvin and Combs remained. In 1968, the Shakabpas organized an adventure trip to Bhutan for the two. As royal guests, the towering pair spent much of their time

exploring the Royal Manas National Park in South Bhutan and took home many trophies.

A decade later, the initiative gained official momentum. In 1978, the matter was formally brought before the 49th session of the National Assembly. The resolution captured the sentiment of a nation eager to start a national airline:

“In order to have trade relations with other countries and obtain external assistance, it is important to have transit facilities. It has been decided, therefore, to set up an international airline with the help of the Government of India. This fulfilment of our desired objectives has made us happy and also has done much to strengthen the friendship between India and Bhutan.”

With this mandate, the path was cleared for the vision to become a reality—a vision whose foundation had been laid with foresight years earlier.

In October 1966, when the foundation stone for the Paro airstrip was laid, it marked a pivotal moment in Bhutan's aviation history. Assisted by India, construction began on the valley's fertile rice fields in early 1965. Progress was

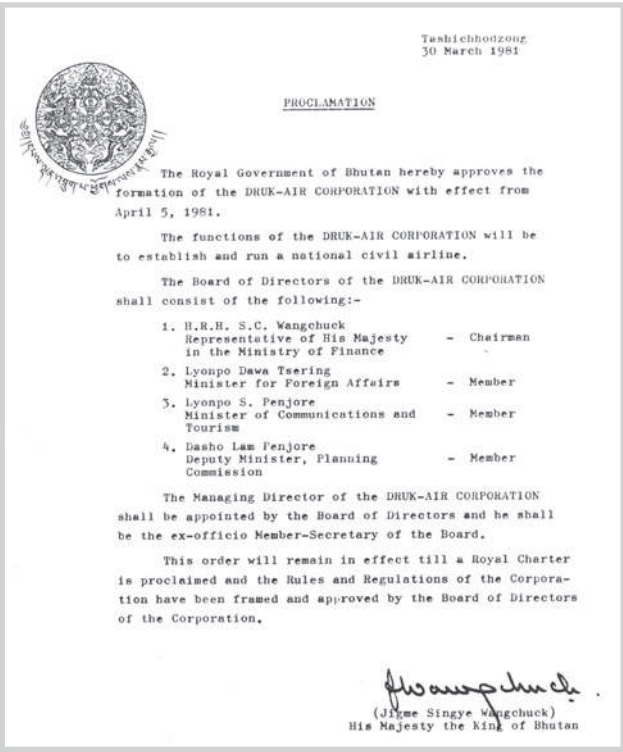




service would be limited to India and who would ultimately own the airline.

The Foreign Minister acknowledged the setbacks, attributing them to recent leadership changes in the Indian government, but assured the assembly members that the project was still a priority. He reported that following a visit to New Delhi by the Fourth King, the Indian government had given its full assurance of assistance. Construction had begun at the Paro airfield, and small aircraft had been ordered on Bhutan's behalf.

He explained that for financial and logistical reasons, the initial route would be between Paro and Calcutta, a major international hub and key transit point in India. The airline, named Royal Bhutan Airlines, would be wholly owned by the Royal Government of Bhutan but initially operated with Indian assistance due to a lack of trained local manpower. Profitability, the Minister admitted, was not the primary motive. "It is a matter of prestige for a country to have airline service," he stated, confirming the government's resolve. The assembly, reflecting the growing national impatience, passed a resolution urging that the airline be established "at the earliest possible."



The Royal Proclamation

The journey toward a national airline for Bhutan took a monumental step forward on 30 March 1981, when His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo issued the royal Proclamation creating Drukair Corporation, effective 5 April 1981. This Proclamation also established the national flag carrier's Board of Directors, appointing Her Royal Highness Ashi Sonam Choden Wangchuck as its Chairman and Mr. Tshering Wangdi as its Managing Director.

With the corporate structure in place, the next challenge was acquiring the aircraft. Tangible progress was announced at the 56th session of the National Assembly in June 1982, when the Foreign Minister reported that an order had been placed for a Dornier aircraft. The plane cost approximately Rs 2 crore (around USD 1.5 million), with delivery scheduled for November 1982. Bhutan used all its foreign reserves, painstakingly accumulated over many years. The national dream was on the verge of becoming a reality.

On 14 January 1983, that dream touched down at Paro Airport. Drukair's first aircraft, a German-made Dornier 228-200 turboprop, completed its landmark touchdown as

ministers and officials looked on. In a ceremony befitting the occasion, members of the Paro monk body performed a Rabney (consecration ceremony) to sanctify the new Dornier, officially starting a new chapter for the national airline.

The state-of-the-art aircraft was chosen for its exceptional Short Take-Off and Landing (STOL) capabilities, essential for navigating Paro's challenging mountain terrain. Financed entirely from the nation's carefully built foreign currency reserves, it represented a significant investment in ending Bhutan's geographic isolation. The journey from Calcutta to Thimphu, which once required an overnight stay and a ten-hour drive, would now take just 90 minutes.

After a month of training flights, the official inauguration took place on 11 February 1983. HRH Ashi Sonam, Chair of the airline's Board, untied the ceremonial ribbon and declared Drukair open for business. In her inaugural address, she captured the historic significance of the day. "Although we opened our door to the outside world over two decades ago, in reality we continued to be isolated due to the poor means of transport and communication," she said, expressing hope that the airline would help Bhutan "emerge from its ancient seclusion."

The commencement of the service, HRH declared, heralded "the dawn of a new era in the kingdom's march towards modernization." She paid tribute to the Paro farmers who had sacrificed their land for the airfield and honoured the vision of His Late Majesty. The ceremony was a vibrant affair, attended by the Royal Family, government ministers, diplomats, and a large local crowd. At 12:45 p.m., the Dornier, piloted by two Indian Airlines captains on deputation, took off for Calcutta with 17 passengers. Ninety minutes later, it landed at Dum Dum Airport. The flight was more than just a journey; it was the realization of a national dream.

The journey to establish Drukair was far more than a logistical or commercial undertaking; it was a 15 year saga of national will. From Prince Namgyal Wangchuck's initial query in New York to the persistent debates in the National Assembly, the airline's story is one of vision and determination. The first flight on 11 February 1983, was not simply the launch of a new route but the fulfillment of a royal promise and a powerful assertion of Bhutan's sovereignty. It was the moment the Kingdom purposefully steered its own course into the modern age, transforming a sun-drenched grain-drying spot into a gateway to the world. In this, the story of Drukair is inseparable from the story of Bhutan itself—a testament to the foresight of our monarchs and their commitment to building a nation that is connected, confident, and in control of its own destiny.

BY TSHERING TASHI





A Living Tribute

Honoring His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo

Choki Traditional Art School (CTAS) is not merely an institution — it is a living, breathing tribute to the visionary leadership of His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, whose wisdom continues to illuminate Bhutan's path.

A Vision Inspired by His Majesty

Founded in 1999, the 25th year of His Majesty's reign, CTAS was born from his timeless vision of Gross National Happiness — a vision that places culture, compassion, and community at the heart of development. Our mission was simple yet profound: to preserve Bhutan's sacred artistic heritage by empowering its youth.

A Dream Fulfilled

What began with just five students by the late Founder,

Dasho Choki Dorji—an artist and cultural steward himself—has blossomed into a thriving community of over 160 boys and girls each year. At CTAS, underprivileged youth do not merely learn the thirteen traditional arts; they inherit a profound sense of identity, purpose, and pride. They emerge not only as skilled artisans, but as devoted custodians of Bhutan's spiritual and cultural soul, carrying forward a legacy that continues to inspire and endure.

Deepening Our Tribute

In heartfelt celebration of His Majesty's 70th Birth Anniversary, CTAS renews its dedication through transformative initiatives that deepen this living legacy:

- **The Living Museum:** A restored 17th-century heritage home, consecrated by Gyelse Tenzin Rabgay, where visitors can experience the rhythms of traditional Bhu-

tanese life — from weaving and painting to brewing suja and molding ritual cakes.

- **Hands-On Artistry:** Guests are invited to paint, sculpt, or craft alongside our students — carrying home not just a souvenir, but a personal connection to Bhutan's living heritage.
- **A Sacred Setting:** located in Chokor, a place of historic miracles, CTAS stands where spirituality, history, and art converge — allowing our students to learn not only with their hands, but with devotion in their hearts.

Our Enduring Commitment

On this auspicious occasion, the entire CTAS family offers our deepest prayers for His Majesty's long life and enduring health. Our graduates, whose artistry now adorns

dzongs, temples, and monasteries across Bhutan, are living proof of His Majesty's enduring vision.

Every carved line, every painted stroke, is a prayer of gratitude—a quiet homage to the vision that began with His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, whose profound dedication to Bhutanese culture laid the foundation for institutions like ours. That sacred legacy has been reverently carried forward by His Majesty the King, whose continued support for tradition and youth empowerment inspires us daily.

At CTAS, we pledge to uphold this noble lineage—not merely preserving art, but nurturing identity, dignity, and hope. Through each student's journey, we commit ourselves to ensuring that the cultural soul Their Majesties have safeguarded continues to flourish, uplift, and guide generations to come.



Special Invitation

As part of the Global Peace Prayer Festival, we warmly invite you to experience this living tribute. Join us from 1st to 20th November 2025 and enjoy 50% off entrance fees. Simply scan the QR code below to receive your discount coupon.

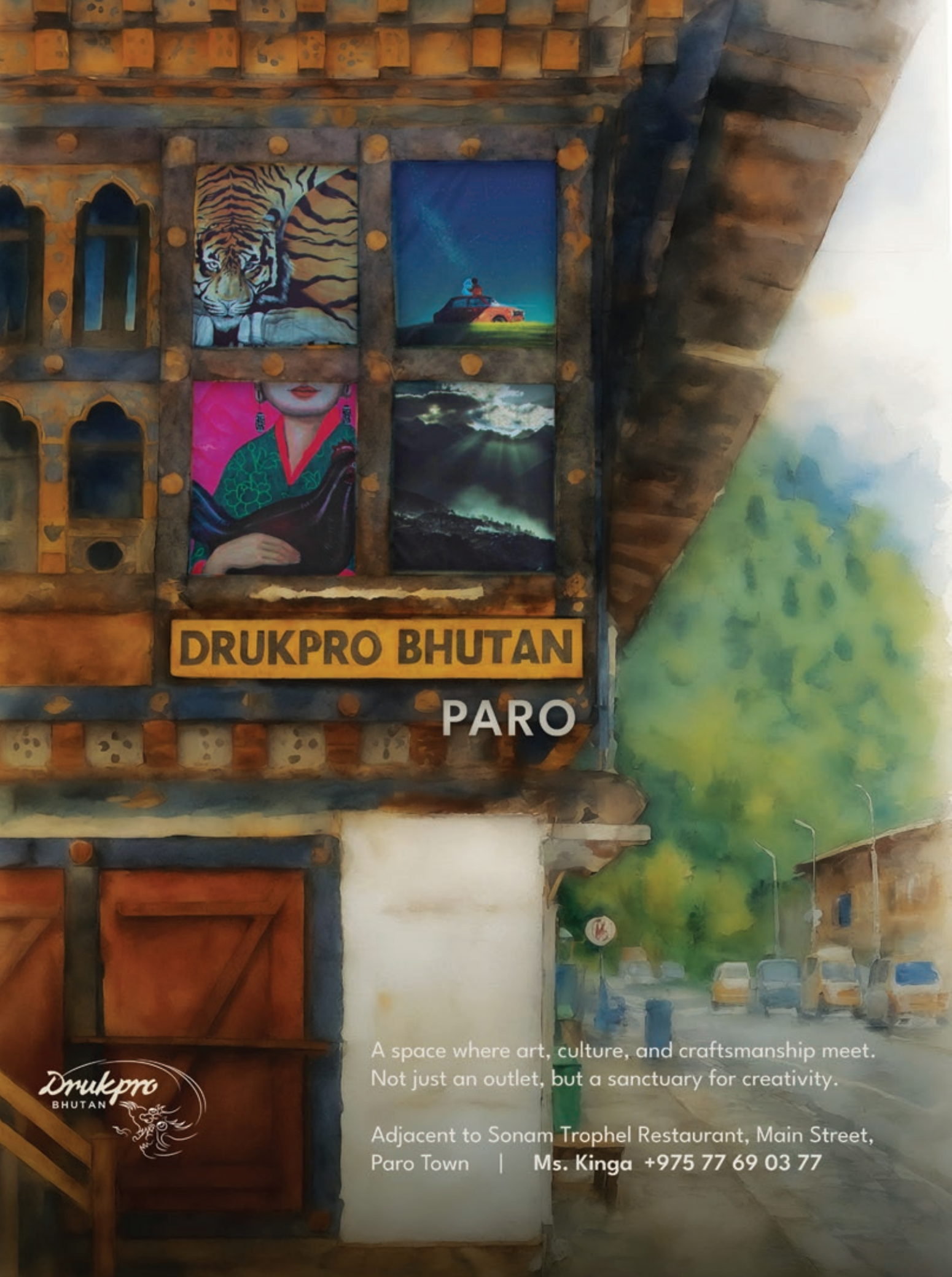


We look forward to welcoming you to our home, our heritage, and our humble offering of gratitude.



SONAM CHOKI

Daughter of the school founder, she is the principal of Choki Traditional Art School. She helped her father pursue his dream to establish the school since 1999 when the school was started, commemorating the His Majesty the Fourth King's 25 years of glorious reign.



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International Students Programme: Study in Bhutan, GCIT



Audrey Low
President, GCIT

Invitation Message from GCIT President

GCIT Spark International Students Programme is dedicated to students around the world. Join a new generation of global thinkers where you will be educated in the mountains, inspired for the future. The programme is ideal for students seeking an unconventional, transformative education that integrates cutting-edge technology with sustainable development practices in one of the world's most serene and spiritually enriching environments.

Learn and immerse where happiness is a successful metric, be part of a carbon-negative revolution and blend ancient wisdom with 21st century innovation from AI intelligence to Monastic Architecture. Connect and chat with us for any short-term or long-term programme where we will support your navigation in ontology, axiology and ensure an epistemic mindset to your education spark.



Leave a mark in Bhutan!

Studying in Bhutan means learning in harmony with nature and culture. By planting trees, you leave a lasting mark, supporting Bhutan's vision of sustainability and giving back to the land that nurtures you.

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for inquiries



Our Recent Collaboration

In March-April 2025, GCIT Spark hosted a group of Nanyang Polytechnic international students from Singapore. The programme merges sustainability and environmental conservation with Tech & AI Innovation.

Learning beyond the classroom, the students discover Bhutan through gamification, synthesis with AI visualisations and dialogues with experts in community led-eco projects.

They also gain fresh perspectives of leadership on how GNH indicators guide Bhutan's policies, businesses and social decisions. In their own words, the students quoted that "this is one of the most valuable learning and impactful immersions they have invested beyond their imagination."





Building Four Betters - Agrifood Systems

Let us be better together!

This year's World Food Day marks 80 years since the founding of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), whose mandate from the outset has been to ensure humanity's freedom from want.

As we mark this day and reflect on challenges past, present and future, I am reminded of one conclusion from that long-ago survey: "The choice is between going forward and going backward."



Dr QU Dongyu, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Bhutan, guided by its Gross National Happiness philosophy and deep commitment to sustainability, shows how traditional values can harmonize with modern development. Its focus on food security, climate resilience, and biodiversity closely aligns with FAO's mandate.

FAO and Bhutan share a long-standing partnership focused on sustainable farming, market access, and improved rural livelihoods, advancing FAO's vision of Better Production, Better Nutrition, Better Environment, and Better Life.

As FAO marks its 80th anniversary, we reaffirm our collective commitment to achieving Zero Hunger by 2030 through innovation, inclusion, and collaboration. Together with Bhutan, we will continue working toward a sustainable and food-secure future for all.



Ken Shimizu
FAO Representative for Bhutan and Nepal



FAO turns 80 worldwide and 44 in Bhutan this October 16

Bhutan joined the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in 1981. Since then, FAO has played a key role in supporting the transformation of country's agrifood systems. From introducing high-value crops and promoting organic agriculture to improving livestock breeds and plant health systems, FAO has supported Bhutan in achieving food security and sustainable rural livelihoods.

FAO has also strengthened the country's resilience to climate change through capacity building, climate-smart agriculture, and the Hand-in-Hand Initiative, which connects evidence-based planning with investment opportunities. Working closely with the Royal Government, FAO continues to advance Bhutan's vision of a sustainable, inclusive, and food-secure future, in harmony with its philosophy of Gross National Happiness.



Agri-preneurship in Bhutan

Perspective from a public servant turned agri-preneur

After a fulfilling eighteen-year tenure in public service, I found myself yearning for change—one that would let me continue to impact my community positively while forging a more profound connection with nature. Driven by a vision of sustainable living, I was compelled to take up farming, a vocation that promised to let me care for the land and provide sustenance for my family and neighbours through dedicated labour of love!

My public service experience was richly rewarding, marked by complex policy-making and addressing a diverse population's conservation-related needs. However, I increasingly craved a tangible, nurturing way to contribute. I saw farming as a seamless continuation of my work, an arena where I could apply my expertise in management and community engagement to the stewardship of land and resources.

Driven by concerns for food security, environmental health, and a commitment to local produce, I turned to farming to embody my values of self-sufficiency, sustainability, and ecological integrity. The simplicity of rural life and the fulfillment of manual labour resonated deeply,

making farming a conscious choice for a more grounded existence.

Building on principles from my public service years—community solidarity, hard work, and shared visions—I founded Happiness Farms to promote sustainable farming in Bhutan. At Farm 1 in Paro, we focus on Japanese pears, apples, and walnuts, known for their market appeal and quality. Farm 2 in Punakha diversifies with avocados, premium oranges, lemons, pineapples, and dragon fruit, meeting market demands and strengthening agricultural resilience.

We continue to expand our fruit selection while offering unique experiences, such as traditional cottage-style accommodations, guided farm tours, fruit plucking, outdoor activities, and a farm-to-table restaurant featuring produce from our fields. Our innovative 'Tree Membership' program allows individuals to own and enjoy the harvest from fruit trees for a set period.

Encouraging Bhutanese youth to pursue farming requires addressing challenges and aligning with their aspirations. Key efforts include integrating modern technology, fostering entrepreneurship, improving educa-

tion, promoting sustainability, increasing land access, and developing robust marketing strategies. Agriculture and rural communities are crucial for Bhutan's vision of becoming a developed economy by 2034, driving economic growth, ensuring food security, and preserving the environment.

As Bhutan enters an era of transformative change, agriculture faces new opportunities and challenges driven by technology, shifting consumer demands, and sustainability. The government's role is vital in supporting farmers, fostering innovation, and driving growth, ensuring the sector's long-term success and national economic benefits.

To this end, the government can implement several key strategies:

1. Providing monetary assistance with grants, low-interest loans and subsidies, especially to those with small-scale operations, to enable farmers to invest in modern technology and eco-friendly farming methods.
2. Funding innovation and research to discover new farming techniques, crop varieties, and animal breeds that are more productive and climate resilient.
3. Developing infrastructure such as roads, irrigation systems, and storage facilities to improve market access and reduce post-harvest losses.
4. Offering education and skills training to prepare farmers for modern, sustainable farming practices and marketing.

5. Improving market access by developing efficient supply chains, offering market information, and assisting with export opportunities to broaden farmers' customer base and income.

6. Promoting sustainable methods like organic farming and agroforestry to preserve the environment and ensure long-term food security.

Addressing policy challenges is also crucial for the advancement of Bhutanese agriculture. Farmers currently contend with issues such as land fragmentation, which impedes effective land management and investment; human-wildlife conflicts, limited access to finance, which restricts the ability to improve farming operations; poor infrastructure and market access, leading to high transportation costs and limited selling opportunities; and climate and environmental challenges that threaten crop yields and productivity.

Empowering farmers is pivotal to overcoming these challenges. Education, training, and access to information can equip them with the skills needed to adopt modern farming practices, enhance crop yields, and diversify their products. This empowerment is essential for the sector's growth and the community's prosperity. The changing agricultural landscape in Bhutan is opening new avenues for agribusiness and entrepreneurship.

The rise of organic farming, agro-tourism, and value-added products presents new business opportunities in agriculture. Initiatives like farm-to-table and eco-friendly processing align with changing consumer preferences, while e-commerce connects farmers directly with fair markets and informed buyers.

Preserving Bhutan's traditional agricultural practices and heritage is vital alongside innovation. By blending entrepreneurship, technology, sustainability, and indigenous knowledge, Bhutan can build a resilient and thriving agricultural future.

All in all, the evolving Bhutanese agricultural sector offers abundant possibilities for growth, innovation, and sustainability. By welcoming change, nurturing entrepreneurial spirit, and harnessing technology, Bhutan's agriculture can flourish in the modern age, contributing to national prosperity and honouring its rich agricultural legacy. The time to initiate these transformative steps is now to ensure readiness for 21st-century transformation.



FARMER DORJI

An environmentalist with 25+ years of experience, he is known for his visionary leadership. He has successfully coordinated significant projects, including the 2008 Smithsonian Folklife Festival (Assistant Coordinator) & Bhutan's Guinness World Record endeavor. He is a passionate farmer & committed tourism ambassador. For inquiries: dorjibt@gmail.com, +975-17909870



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Rules of Membership:

- Understand some years the trees will produce different numbers of produce.
- Donate the produce to any one of the following Institutions:
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 - Bhutan Kidney Foundation
 - Monks at the Dobji Monastic School, Paro
 - Nunnery
 - The Happiness Farm
- or make a donation of your choice
- Harvest and enjoy fruits



Membership Options, Duration, and Pricing:

We are thrilled to announce the launch of our new exciting initiative: the First-of-its-Kind Fruit Tree Membership Project at The Happiness Farm 1. This farm-orchard project aims to provide individuals with the unique opportunity to own and enjoy the fruits of Japanese Pears, and Apple trees for a specified duration. We are offering three Membership options on a first-come, first-served basis, with limited trees available.

Happiness Farm Yearly Membership Package

For Residents: Nu 50,000/year

- 1** • Apple tree
• Pear tree
- 4** • free lunches
• free dinners
• breakfasts

FREE

- 2 rooms for two nights
- to visit your tree anytime and use the common areas.
- Able to book rooms and meals at members discount of 20%



Please note

Please note that by participating in this project, you will have full ownership of the Fruiting Trees and the right to enjoy its harvest throughout the chosen duration. However, please be informed that this ownership/membership does not extend to the land itself.

In the event that you are unable to personally nurture and harvest the fruits from your tree, we encourage you to consider donating them to a local institution, school, or charity. By doing so, you contribute to the local employment and economy of the community through your goodwill and participation.



The Happiness Farm will post the detailed information regarding the Project on our Facebook page - including tree availability, contract terms and conditions. Please visit our social media page regularly to access all the necessary information and make an informed decision about becoming a Proud Tree Owner.

For Non-Residents:

- 1** • Apple tree
• Pear tree
- 2** • free lunches
• free dinners
• breakfasts
• rooms for 2 nights

Fee Structure

5 years	10 years	20 years
@USD \$ 599	@USD \$ 999	@USD \$ 1799

FREE

- to visit your tree anytime and use the common areas.
- Able to book rooms and meals at members discount of 20% for family members



Corporate Package:

One Fruit Bearing Apple and Pear Trees

Fee Structure

5 years	10 years	20 years
@USD \$ 599	@USD \$ 999	@USD \$ 1799

As an environmentalist at heart, the proceeds from this initiative will be reinvested in the further development of The Happiness Farm 1 and citizen initiatives focused on environmental conservation in the locality. By participating in this project, you will not only enjoy the fruits of your tree but also contribute to the growth and sustainability of the farm and its valuable community and environmental initiatives.

We invite our valued participants to embark on this journey with us in this First-of-its-Kind Fruit Tree Membership Project. We look forward to your kind support in creating a flourishing and environmentally conscious community.

CONTACT US @

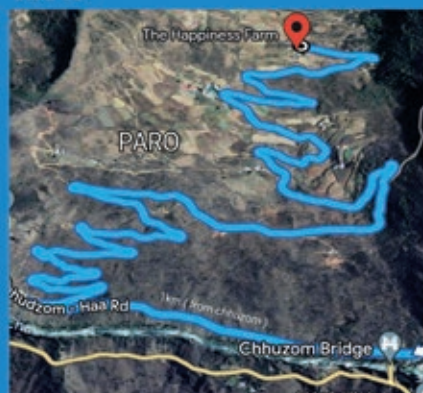
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On this sacred day, the 11th November 2025

the NHDCL family joins the Nation in gratitude and reverence to honour the 70th Birth Anniversary of His Majesty The Fourth Druk Gyalpo Jigme Singye Wangchuck. Today, with hearts full of gratitude and devotion, we reflect and celebrate His Majesty's Selfless Service that continues to inspire our lives and uplift our spirits. With deep devotion, we offer our prayers and wishes for His Majesty's good health and long life.

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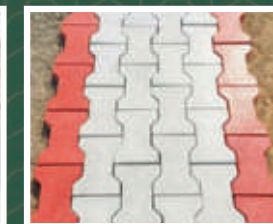
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Community consultation at JWS Office.



Karma Raygyel, a rescued elephant calf, with one of its primary caretakers at the JWS Office.

COMMUNITY VOICES IN CONSERVATION

“**Maymay rumay na...**” the villagers tell us. Soaking up the slow-to-depart last remnants of summer as autumn began to make its presence felt, we were in Jomotsangkha Wildlife Sanctuary (JWS), the smallest in Bhutan, last September.

Bhutan’s landscapes are diverse- from towering mountain ranges to verdant tropical forests, each leaving a lasting impression. Among these is JWS tucked away in the southern foothills. Home to endangered species like the Bengal tiger and Asian elephant, over 1,750 people share the land with these iconic species. Beyond its ecological significance, Jomotsangkha stands as a living tapestry of culture, resilience, and deep-rooted connection to nature.

Boots on the ground and spirits high, the WWF-Bhutan team set out across Jomotsangkha, gathering data and collecting stories for the next chapter of the Climate Crowd project. During our waking hours, we traveled through rugged landscapes, meeting local communities, exchanging ideas, and exploring practical solutions that

could be shaped and carried forward by the hands of the people themselves.

Whether it was beekeeping, bamboo and soft broom grass plantation, or the revival of sacred lakes, every conversation circled back to a single, reverberating phrase in Tshangla: “Maymay rumay na”—a stern caution that translates to, “You will meet the elephants.” It’s a phrase that stays with you, a quiet reminder of the giant’s enduring presence and power.

Living with the elephants

The Asian elephant (*Elephas maximus*), magnificent mammals in both stature and persona, roam Bhutan’s southern wilderness. Elephants hold a special place in the people’s hearts and when people speak of them, they speak with reverence. “They are keystone modifiers. Their presence profoundly shapes the ecosystems they inhabit,” explains Krishna Prasad Dhimal, a forestry officer at JWS.

Krishna became a vital link between our team and the



Chana Shyam, 71, shows us his bee hives

community of Jomotsangkha. He walked with us through every consultation and field visit, offering deep knowledge of both the land and the local traditions. His perspective helped us better understand the challenges and opportunities ahead, grounding our work in the lived realities of the communities.

Like all other wildlife, elephants play a vital role in maintaining biodiversity and supporting the delicate balance of ecosystems. For the communities who share their land with these mammals, the relationship runs deep.

These people have been central to elephant conservation efforts but it hasn’t come without challenges. Conservation, while essential, can also disrupt livelihoods. At an integrated organic farm in Namchazor, Langchenphu or *Haati Tar* (flatlands of the elephants), a farmer is piloting agave as a natural fence to keep elephants at bay while staying eco-friendly.

Climate Crowd in action: Community voices in conservation

That’s where Climate Crowd comes in. Spearheaded by WWF-Bhutan, this grassroots initiative empowers communities to develop nature-based solutions that are both sustainable and practical. From alternative income sources to innovative land-use practices, the project is helping Bhutanese communities adapt while continuing to protect the wildlife they live alongside. The project’s true strength lies in the people who call it home and consultations are where the real groundwork happens.

I was reminded of the time His Majesty the Fourth King traversed the country listening to the people, consulting communities as the first Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan was being drafted. Born from the wisdom of His Majesty The Fourth King and shaped through extensive community consultations, Article 5 enshrines environmental stewardship as a sacred duty of every Bhutanese.

It calls upon us to protect our pristine landscapes and rich biodiversity for the benefit of not our generation, but of generations yet to come too. With a constitutional mandate to maintain at least sixty percent forest cover for all time, Bhutan stands as a global beacon of ecological responsibility and intergenerational equity.

Inspired and fueled by the spirit of community, our team travelled to Jomotsangkha not just to gather data, but to listen, connect and honor the voices that guide our work. We set out with a clear goal: revisit the interventions introduced during the first phase of the Climate Crowd project and, through direct conversations with the communities, explore new ideas that could lead to meaningful, real-world impact in the next phase. These consultations are at the very heart of the project.

At WWF-Bhutan, community engagement isn’t a checkbox, it is the foundation. Whether in remote villages or bustling towns, our interventions are co-designed with the people who live closest to the land. This bottom-up approach ensures that conservation efforts are not only environmentally sound but socially just.

Take, for another example, the Conflict to Coexistence (C2C) strategy. It’s more than just another framework; it’s a guiding approach we are committed to advancing. By embedding environmental and social safeguards into



Agave plant fencing at Namchazor integrated organic farm.



Green paddy fields in Langchenphu.

every step, we ensure that interventions respect local customs, spiritual sites, and traditional ways of life. After all, conservation must coexist with culture, not compete with it. This mindset needs to become the default for all conservation efforts.

Resilience in the face of change

Jomotsangkha's communities, despite facing challenges like rural-urban migration among the productive working-age population, remain remarkably resilient. Sitting with them, hearing their stories, and gathering data reaffirmed our role as stewards of the land. The community's insights are now helping shape the next phase of Climate Crowd, which focuses on climate adaptation and effective nature-based solutions.

Climate Crowd interventions aren't a one-size-fits-all model. Climate change affects communities differently, and our responses must reflect that. Through key informant interviews, we've captured how shifting weather patterns are impacting livelihoods, and how people are adapting.

In Langchenphu village, Ghana Shyam Kharka, 71, a progressive beekeeper shares his concern, "the bees, typically arrive in October and stay until June, are now migrating out earlier due to rising summer temperatures. Their shortened stay is affecting honey production".

For nearly nine months each year, the bees make their home on Ghana Shyam's farm and their presence is essential. Bees play a critical role in pollinating crops, and the honey they produce provides farmers like Ghana Shyam with a source of income.

These conversations are a form of outreach and through Climate Crowd, WWF Bhutan and the Department of Forest and Park Services are redefining conservation by

putting people at the center. Past efforts like "Coexisting with Tigers under a Changing Climate" and "Building Resilience in Snow Leopard Landscapes" in Jigme Dorji National Park were grounded in local knowledge and leadership.

Climate Crowd's impact

The Climate Crowd project is helping communities thrive across Bhutan. In Langchenphu, once-fallow paddy fields are now green, owing to Nu 2.9 million invested in water infrastructure upgrades. Taps and irrigation canals in Langchenphu and Samrang are now flowing - bringing water to homes and fields alike.

In Daagchukha village, nestled within Jigme Dorji National Park, 6.1 km of chain-link fencing was installed to protect over 70 acres of farmland from wildlife. Erythrina trees, used as live fence posts, also help prevent soil erosion.

Meanwhile, in Soe and Yaksa, communities have established an incense processing unit, adding an alternative income to their livelihoods.

By placing communities at the heart of conservation, we're not only safeguarding biodiversity, but we are also uplifting those who live in harmony with it. The future of conservation lies in collaboration, respect, and listening. And in places like Jomotsangkha, the message is clear; it's a clarion call.



KELZANG LHAMO

She is a Monitoring, Evaluation and Safeguards officer at WWF-Bhutan. Outside of work, she enjoys reading, anime, and traveling.



Our Vision

A sustainable and just Bhutan for nature and people

Our Goals

Securing natural ecosystems
Fostering greater sense of ownership and responsibility
Catalyzing a green and nature-based economy

VISIT PANDA EXPLORE: LEARN ABOUT OUR WORK IN BHUTAN. GET INVOLVED.



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About the Airline

Drukair Corporation Limited, operating under the brand Drukair – Royal Bhutan Airlines, serves as the national flag carrier of the Kingdom of Bhutan. Established on April 5, 1981, by Royal Proclamation of His Majesty the Fourth King, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the airline has since been a proud symbol of Bhutanese aviation.

Headquartered in Paro, Bhutan, the airline operates from Paro International Airport, connecting Bhutan's stunning landscapes with key cities across South Asia and beyond. Currently, the airline serves ten international destinations and three domestic routes, positioning itself as a vital gateway to Bhutan. On October 28, 2024, Drukair expanded its operations by introducing direct flights to Dubai, marking its entry into the Middle Eastern market and further enhancing Bhutan's global connectivity.

In addition to its fixed-wing operations, Drukair offers helicopter services, further diversifying its portfolio and ensuring the travel needs of both Bhutanese and international travelers are met.

Our Fleet

Business Class: 20 Seats
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Economy Class: 102 Seats

3 Airbus A319



Business Class: 8 Seats
Economy Class: 32 Seats

1 ATR 42-600



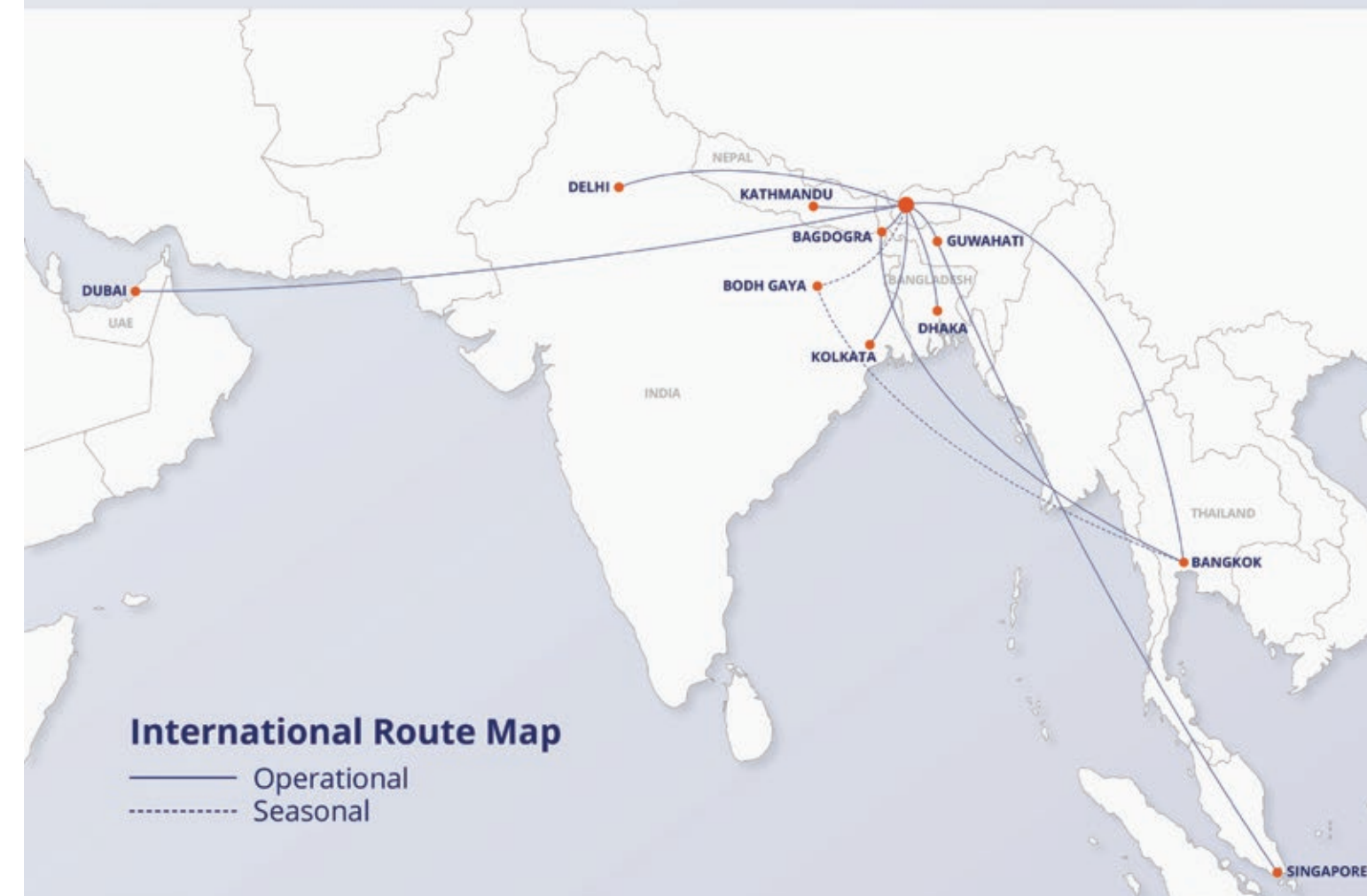
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— Operational



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— Operational
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IN THE PRESS

Drukair Joins Effort to Advance Gelephu Mindfulness City and International Airport



As Bhutan takes flight towards His Majesty's visionary Gelephu Mindfulness City and the new Gelephu International Airport, Drukair proudly joined fellow DHI companies in volunteering to be a part of this journey of progress.

Drukair Commemorates Her Royal Highness The Gyalsem's 2nd Birth Anniversary with In-Flight Celebration



Drukair marked the 2nd Birth Anniversary of Her Royal Highness The Gyalsem with a special celebration in the skies.

Successful Conclusion of Northeast India Agents' Meet Strengthens Engagement Across Darjeeling, Gangtok & Bagdogra



The event provided a valuable platform to connect with key travel decision-makers in the region, further leveraging Drukair's unique position in the market.

Elegance takes flight



We're proud to unveil our new signature necktie and scarf, exclusively designed for Drukair by world-renowned designer Christian Louboutin — inspired by our dragon emblem and the spirit of Bhutan. A perfect blend of tradition, strength, and sophistication.

Drukair Partners with Phyathai 2 International Hospital, Bangkok



Drukair has partnered with Phyathai 2 International Hospital to offer passengers including Frequent Flyer members exclusive discounts on medical services. This collaboration reinforces our commitment to ensuring a safer, healthier, and more comfortable travel experience.

Drukair Signs Joint Venture Agreement for Dragon Gliders Project in Bhutan



Drukair has officially entered into a Joint Venture Agreement with Swiss entrepreneur Mr. Fritz Loppacher to establish Dragon Gliders Private Limited in Bumthang, marking a significant milestone for Bhutan's aviation and tourism sectors. This venture represents Drukair's first international collaboration focused on sustainable, high-altitude glider operations.

Drukair Hosts Annual Future Activity Review Meeting



Drukair held its annual Future Activity Review Meeting, bringing together station managers to review achievements, address challenges, and plan strategies to enhance service and passenger experience.

Drukair Showcases Bhutan at Travel Counsellors Trade Show 2025 in Dubai



Drukair participated in the Travel Counsellors Trade Show 2025 at Hilton Dubai Palm Jumeirah, connecting with global travel professionals, strengthening partnerships, and highlighting Bhutan as a unique destination with direct flights from Dubai.

Drukair Participates in Mélange Travel Fair, Mumbai



Drukair, in partnership with its GSA in India, joined the Mélange Travel Fair in Mumbai. The event offered a key platform to strengthen brand presence, engage with trade professionals, and promote Bhutan as a unique travel destination.

Drukair commemorates the 14th Royal Wedding Anniversary of Their Majesties with a special celebration



Drukair celebrated the 14th Royal Wedding Anniversary of Their Majesties with a heartfelt tribute, marking the occasion with sweet delights onboard to honor 14 years of royal love and devotion. The celebration extended beyond the skies with a grand "Drukair Night" event, fostering unity and camaraderie within the Drukair family, and reflecting the deep respect and joy shared by the nation on this auspicious day.

The Sky's the Limit: Drukair's Tongsa Penlop Inspire Program Returns to Inspire Young Minds.

After a five-year hiatus, Drukair is proud to announce the much-anticipated resumption of its Tongsa Penlop Inspire Program (TPIP) this year. This flagship initiative, part of Drukair's Corporate Social Responsibility, is set to continue its profound mission: to provide underprivileged students in Bhutan with truly once-in-a-lifetime learning experiences.

A Vision for Future Generations

Envisioned by Yab DASHO Dhondup GYALTSHEN and initially launched in 2018, the TPIP is designed to transcend traditional classroom learning. It offers selected students fully sponsored excursions to diverse Drukair destinations, opening their eyes to a world beyond their immediate surroundings through travel, cultural immersion, and educational adventures. As Bhutan's national flag carrier, Drukair is committed to giving back to the community, and this program serves as a powerful tool to inspire academic and personal growth among the youth.



"Visiting Bangkok felt like a dream. It showed me there's more to the world than our mountains and made me want to study harder. Now, I believe I can do anything if I try."
- Sonam Pelden, Tang Central School, Bumthang

"Flying to Bangkok and seeing a new culture changed my life. Every day made me feel more confident and showed me that the world is full of possibilities. This trip made me dream bigger."
- Dhendrup Rabten, Jigme Sherubling Central School, Trashigang



Journeys of Discovery: The Impact So Far

Since its inception, the program has created lasting memories and inspired remarkable personal growth among its participants. The inaugural edition in 2018 took 44 underprivileged students including four with special needs on an unforgettable educational journey to Bangkok, Thailand. This was followed in 2019 by another group who embarked on a six-day learning tour to the same destination. Each journey has been thoughtfully designed to expand students' worldviews and ignite their curiosity for learning and exploration. The program continues to grow, welcoming more participants and embracing a more diverse group of students from various schools and backgrounds across Bhutan.

Join Us in Inspiring Future Generations

The Tongsa Penlop Inspire Program thrives on community spirit, and Drukair extends a heartfelt invitation for individuals to become a vital part of this transformative endeavor. Your contribution can play a pivotal role in shaping the lives of less privileged students, fostering a brighter future for them.

To amplify your generosity, Drukair is committed to matching every contribution on a one-to-one basis, effectively doubling the impact of your support. We believe that by working together, we can create "ripples of positive change that will resonate through generations". For further details on how you can help or to make a contribution, please contact us at:

tpip@drukair.com.bt / +975 77454495



"Taking my first flight and visiting a new country felt like stepping into another world. Every moment was a lesson, showing me that learning isn't just in classrooms. It has inspired me to study well and aim higher in life."
- Tshering Dema, Butekha Middle Secondary School, Paro

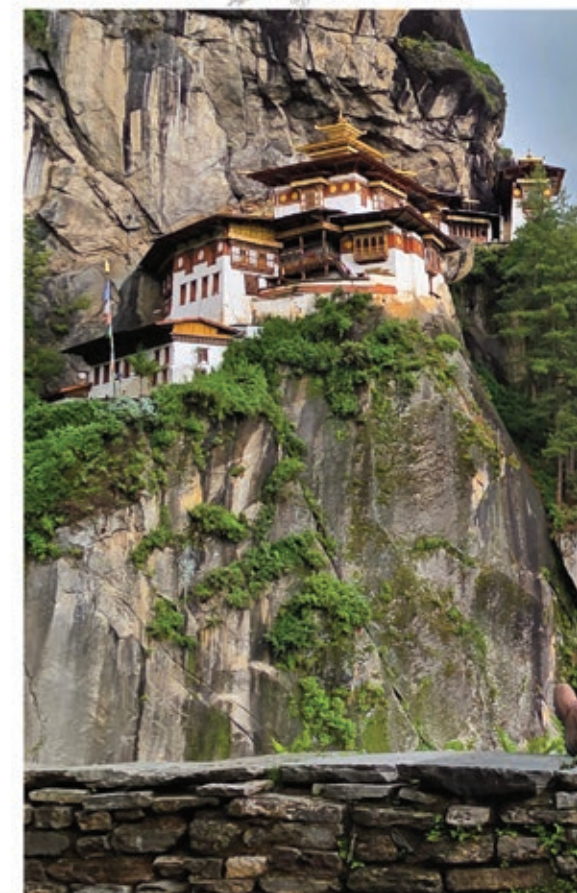
"My first flight, seeing the sea, and exploring Bangkok were amazing experiences. This trip showed me that the world is full of opportunities, and now I'm more motivated to work hard and study well."
- Sumchu Dema, Minjiwoong Central School, Samdrup Jongkhar



Discover Bhutan

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Transit Procedure at Suvarnabhumi Airport, Bangkok

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- 3 Locate your Airline Transit Counter: Proceed to **Floor 3**, where all the Transfer Desks are located.
**Generally the transit counter opens 3 hours before your departure time.*
- 4 Check-in at the Transit Counter.
- 5 Proceed to Your Boarding Gate.
**Please note that the Boarding Gate assignments may change occasionally, so always reconfirm your gate by checking the Flight Information Display Screen.*

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**Generally the transit counter opens 3 hours before your departure time.*
- 4 Check-in at the Drukair Transit Counter.
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**Please note that the Boarding Gate assignments may change occasionally, so always reconfirm your gate by checking the Flight Information Display Screen.*

For Drukair-specific assistance: bkkstation@drukair.com.bt
For airport-related information: suvarnabhumi.airport@tha.co

Passenger Transfer Guidelines in Dubai Airport

- 1 Follow "Connections" Signs:
After you disembark, look for signs marked "Connections" to guide you towards the transfer area.
- 2 Proceed to Transfer Security:
Go through the security check located just before the "Connections" counters.
- 3 Visit the "Marhaba" Counters:
Once the passenger has cleared security, proceed directly to the "Marhaba" counters. The Marhaba team will guide you through the transfer process and direct you to the "Connections" counter. At the "Connections" counter, you'll receive your onward boarding pass.
- 4 Relax and Enjoy Amenities:
If your layover is longer than 4 hours, you can relax in the departure area and return to the "Connections" counters once your onward airline begins check-in, which is usually 3-4 hours before departure.
- 5 Boarding:
Arrive at your boarding gate at least 1 hour before departure.

Please note: No additional charges apply for this service

Additional Information

Transfers Not Available:

Passengers will not be able to transfer on the following airlines:

- British Airways
- United Airlines
- Pobeda
- Wizz Air
- Flyadeal

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Passengers are advised to avoid short layovers to allow enough time for inter terminal transfers.

Contact Us:

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Email: hongkong@drukair.com.bt

AUSTRALIA

Sydney (GSA - Passenger)

Aviation Online Pty Ltd.
Suite 14b, Level 1, 123 Clarence St, Sydney, NSW 2000, Australia
Tel: 1300 781 747
Email: sydney@drukair.com.bt

CHINA

SHANGHAI (GSA - Passenger)

WorldAir Travel Co. Ltd.
Floor 3, Building E, No. 998, Shenbin South Road,
Minhang District, Shanghai.
Tel: +8613501919559
Email: shanghai@drukair.com.bt

U.S.A

Florida (GSA - Passenger)

AirlinePros International Inc.
9F Chung Nam building,
6303 Blue Lagoon Drive, Suite 400,
Miami, Florida 33126, USA
Tel: +877 958 1077
Email: florida@drukair.com.bt

KUNMING (CSA)

KUZU Co., Ltd.
Kunming 650000, People's East Road, Yi Hao Mall,
2205/3
Tel: 0086-1588707352; +86 (0871) 6720 7653
Email: hadyagong@mylish.com
Website: www.mylsh.co

ISRAEL

Tel Aviv-Yafo (GSA - Passenger)

TAL Aviation Israel
2 Ben Gurion Road, Ramat Gan,
5257334, Israel
Tel: +972-3-795-2111
Email: israel@drukair.com.bt

DRUKAIR OFFICES

INDIA (GSA - Passenger)

AHMEDABAD

Global Aviation Services Pvt. Ltd.
202-203, Olive Arcade, 2nd Floor Umashankar Jashi
Marg, Off C.G.Road, Nr. Girish Cold Drinks Cross Roads,
Ahmedabad - 380006.
Phone: +91 079 4021 6503-04
Email: ahmedabad@drukair.com.bt /
ahmedabadcargo@drukair.com.bt

COCHIN

Global Aviation Services Pvt. Ltd.
K.G. Oxford Business Centre, Office No.2A,
Second Floor, Sreekanth Road, Ravipuram,
Ernakulam, Kochi - 682 016.
Phone: +91 04842350544
Email: cochin@drukair.com.bt /
cochincargo@drukair.com.bt

JALANDHAR

Global Aviation Services Pvt. Ltd.
204, Prestige Chambers, 1st Floor, Opp Narinder Cinema,
G.T. Road, Jalandhar - 144 001.
Phone: +91 0181 5082071
Email: jalandhar@drukair.com.bt /
jalandharcargo@drukair.com.bt

KUWAIT

KUWAIT CITY (GSA - Passenger)

Caesars Int'l Travel Co. W.L.L.
18th Floor, Aljawhara Tower,
Ali Al-Salem Street, Safat-13056,
PB-28229
Tel: +965 22072040
Email: kuwait@drukair.com.bt

BENGALURU

Global Aviation Services Pvt. Ltd.
C-4/C5, Devatha Plaza, 131/132
Residency Road, Bangalore - 560025.
Phone: +91 080 22222938
Email: bengaluru@drukair.com.bt /
bengalurucargo@drukair.com.bt

HYDERABAD

Global Aviation Services Pvt. Ltd.
5-9-58/A/203, 2nd Floor, Gupta Estate,
Basheer Bagh, Hyderabad - 500004
Phone: +91 040 66102785
Email: hyderabad@drukair.com.bt /
hyderabadcargo@drukair.com.bt

LUCKNOW

Global Aviation Services Pvt. Ltd.
Ground Floor, Ganpati House,
4-Way Road, Madan Mohan Malviya Marg,
Lucknow - 226001.
Phone: +91 0522 2209824
Email: lucknow@drukair.com.bt /
lucknowcargo@drukair.com.bt

CHENNAI

Global Aviation Services Pvt. Ltd.
Global House, 733 Anna Salai
Chennai - 600 006.
Phone: +91 044 42959631
Email: chennai@drukair.com.bt /
chennaicargo@drukair.com.bt

JAIPUR

Global Aviation Services Pvt. Ltd.
304, Ganpati Plaza, M. I. Road,
Jaipur - 302 001
Phone: +91 0141-2377752
Email: jaipur@drukair.com.bt /
jaipurcargo@drukair.com.bt

PUNE

Global Aviation Services Pvt. Ltd.
3, 4, 7 & 7A 1st Floor, Hermes Kunj
(A wing), Mangaldas Road, Pune - 411011
Phone: +91 020 105 2222
Email: pune@drukair.com.bt /
punecargo@drukair.com.bt

UNITED KINGDOM

LONDON (GSA - Passenger)

Flight Directors Scheduled Services Limited
Suite 9a, Gatwick House, Peeks Brook Lane,
Horley, Surrey, RH6 9ST, United Kingdom.
Tel: +44 1293 874912
Email: london@drukair.com.bt

GERMANY

FRANKFURT (GSA - Passenger)

TAL Aviation Germany UG
Hanauer Landstr. 136, 60314, Frankfurt.
Tel: +49-69-31090200
Email: frankfurt@drukair.com.bt
Website: www.talaviation.com

VIETNAM

Ho Chi Minh City (GSA- Passenger)

Hong Ngoc Ha Joint Stock Company
15-17 Ngo Thoi Nhiem, Ward 06, District 3
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.
Tel: 028 38 365 318
Email: vietnam@drukair.com.bt

enquiry@drukair.com.bt

reservation@drukair.com.bt

wearelistening@drukair.com.bt

happiness@drukair.com.bt

card_refund@drukair.com.bt

>> for general enquiry (During weekdays - Working Hrs. 9AM-5PM BST)

>> for ticket booking and date change before 4 days of departure. (Within Bhutan only)

>> for any complaints and feedback. (During weekdays - Working Hrs. 9AM-5PM BST)

>> for queries related to HappinessMiles Program

>> for any assistance related to ticket purchased from website (During weekdays - Working Hrs. 9AM-5PM BST)

PAY LESS, CARRY MORE

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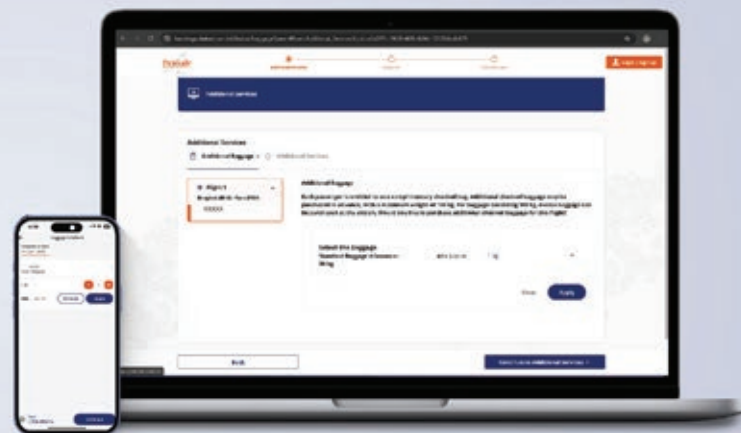
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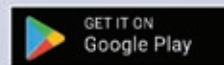
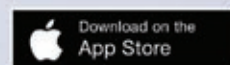
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Pre- purchase baggage option available at:

drukair.com.bt

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ELEVATING BHUTAN : SOAR WITH DHS



EXPERIENCE
BHUTAN'S
WONDER
FROM ABOVE.

Soar above snow-dusted peaks, glacial rivers, ancient fortresses, and untouched valleys that reveal the raw beauty of Bhutan. Whether it's a scenic flight over the Himalayas, a pilgrimage to remote monasteries, or a quick transfer across the kingdom, every journey promises comfort, safety, and awe-inspiring views.

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A dh company

Contact us to learn more about our packages

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heli@drukair.com.bt

INFO & TIPS



DRUKAIR FLIGHT TIMING

As Bhutan's National Flag carrier operating in and out of Paro, Drukair requests every passenger to refer Conditions of Carriage and the foot note on ticket itinerary. Due to operational challenges out of Paro International Airport in Bhutan that is severely dependent on weather conditions, Drukair makes every effort to maintain the schedule integrity. However due to circumstances beyond our control, schedule timings are subject to change without prior notice. Therefore, we request travelers to check with Drukair offices or its agents for the latest information.



RESERVATION

For any travel requirements, please contact reservation@drukair.com.bt or call our toll free number 1300 (in-country) / +975 8276430 (International) / WhatsApp number +975 17131300 for any assistance required. International airties, tour promoters and travel agents abroad are invited to communicate their reservation requirements with the space control of Drukair.

RECONFIRMATION

Request all passengers to reconfirm their reservations 72 hours prior to departure. For passengers in Bhutan, reconfirmation can be either done at any Drukair offices or you can contact reservation@drukair.com.bt or call Drukair's toll free no: 1300 / WhatsApp number +975 17131300 during office hours 07:00 - 21:00 (GMT+6).

VALIDITY

Tickets issued against full fare are valid for a period of one year from the date of travel, except as otherwise specified in the ticket conditions.



CHANGE IN FARE AND TAXES

Fares and taxes are subject to change without notice. In the event of a passenger commencing journey after a revised tariff becomes effective, the differences between the fare paid and the fare applicable will be collected from the passenger before embarkation.

REFUND AND CANCELLATION

Refund of ticket can be made at the issuing office. For the conditions of refund and cancellation, please check with any Drukair Office.



BAGGAGE

A checked baggage allowance of 40kg in business class and 30kg in economy on international flights and 20kg for economy and 30kg for business class for domestic flights is permissible. An infant under two years of age is not entitled to baggage allowance.

HAND BAGGAGE

For security reasons and your own safety, passengers are allowed to carry only one piece of hand baggage. The total of its three dimensions must not exceed 100 cm, and the weight must not exceed 5 kg in Economy Class and 7 kg in Business Class.



SECURITY

All passengers and their baggage are subject to check before boarding a flight. Transit passengers are therefore requested to remain on board at transit stations as otherwise, they will be again subject to security checks.

According to the Security Regulations, passengers are advised:

Not to accept any baggage/packet from unknown person. Not to leave baggage unobserved at anytime especially within airport area. Unattended baggage may be removed by the Airport Security Staff as object of suspicion.

If passengers are carrying any arms or explosive substance, it must be declared before check-in. Concealment is an offense under Aircrafts Act & Rules.

To remove battery/dry cells from radio, transistor sets, two-in-one and other such electrical/electronic items and hand them over to the airline staff before security check or carry them in registered baggage.



CUSTOMS: TOURIST ALLOWANCE

A tourist is allowed to bring any quantity of tobacco products. However, it must be declared at the customs. The import of tobacco products is subjected to 100% Customs Duty.

A tourist shall be allowed to import temporarily free customs duty for his/her personal effects and articles required for the visit, provided that the items imported are for personal use only. A tourist is allowed to bring in one liter of alcohol.

All information mentioned above are based on those valid at the time of print and are, therefore, subject to change. For further information, contact any Drukair Office or its agents in your area or visit our website: www.drukair.com.bt



VISA REQUIREMENTS TO ENTER BHUTAN

Visitors of all nationalities, except those from India, require a visa before entering Bhutan. For all visitors, except those from Bangladesh and the Maldives, this visa must be applied for and approved in advance of travel. Visitors from Bangladesh and the Maldives also require a visa, but this can be applied for and approved either in advance of travel or upon arrival in Bhutan.

Visitors from India are able to apply for a permit but are required to hold an Indian passport or an Indian voter ID card. For Indian nationals under the age of 18, a passport or a birth certificate can be used to enter and they must be accompanied by a legal guardian. Nationals from Switzerland and Thailand holding diplomatic or government-official passports are eligible for a visa at their port of entry.

Before travelling, visitors from India, Bangladesh and the Maldives can apply for a permit (Indian nationals) or visa (Bangladeshi or Maldivian nationals) online. You may also apply at the point of entry, but please be aware that there may be a long wait depending on the number of applicants at the time. We recommend arranging your permit/visa beforehand.

Note to all passengers: All passengers are advised to check their travel document validity. For passengers traveling with their passport, validity of their passport should not be less than six months from the date of departure from Bhutan. Drukair will not be liable and will refuse check-in of those passengers whose passport does not meet the validity requirement.



IMPORTANT INSTRUCTION

For safety, passengers are required to fasten seat belts during take off and landing. However, they are advised to keep the seat belts fastened during the entire flight.

Smoking and chewing "doma" (areca nut and betel leaf) in the aircraft are strictly prohibited.



SPECIAL LOUNGES

Executive/Business Class passengers, including counter upgrades/ FFP entitlements as per FFP policy document can avail the comfort of our special lounges. They offer a buffet service, Internet access points and washroom facilities.



TRAVEL TIPS

Transit time should not exceed 24 hours to connect on your onward carrier and to avoid any misconnections. Please note that unfortunately we are unable to offer advice or guidance on frequently changing restrictions in individual countries, therefore all passengers are advised to check related government websites for further travel advice.

As per the notice circulated by Thai Immigration Office to all airlines, visa on arrival for passengers holding one-way or open ticket will not be extended. Therefore, such passengers are advised to obtain necessary visa prior from the concerned diplomatic representations abroad to avoid being inconvenienced and deported. All transit passengers are requested to observe the following procedures pertaining to transit check-in.

Passengers can check-in on Drukair flights on transit at Bangkok without having to go through immigrations. The process is as follows:

Outbound Flights - Out of Paro

To kindly inform the check-in counter at Paro on details of the onward flight

Baggage will then be tagged as transit showing final destination of the passenger on the onward carrier

At the transit check-in at Bangkok passengers are requested to present their baggage tag to the transit desk

The boarding pass is issued on the onward carrier and the baggage transferred

For any special assistance required for groups on transit you may please email enquiry@drukair.com.bt



MEALS & REFRESHMENTS

Drukair offers multi-cuisine menu on board. Bangkok Airways Catering, Paro Catering, Taj Group and SATS provide most of our in-flight catering.

Meals are served after a flight is airborne for reasonable duration. The timings are:

Breakfast: 0730 - 1030

Lunch: 1030 - 1430

Dinner: 1830 - 2130

On one-hour sector flight, snacks are served. Refreshment and drinks are served throughout the duration of the flight.

Customs Information

CUSTOMS DECLARATION

Passengers entering Bhutan have to pass through the customs checks. All passengers carrying baggage in excess of allowable limit (which is goods worth US \$1000), or, dutiable goods, or, restricted items, must make declaration in the prescribed form.

Should the passengers fail to make the declaration in whole, or, file incomplete declaration, as against the mandate of Section 96, Ch. 13 of the Customs Act of Bhutan, 2017 (CAB), it shall lead to invocation of Section 143 & 146, Ch. 19 of the CAB.

Note: Baggage or goods in commercial nature shall not be considered as free baggage allowance even if the value of the goods is less than US\$ 1000 or equivalent Ngultrum.

FREE BAGGAGE ALLOWANCE FOR AIR PASSENGERS

Personal effects up to the assessed value of US\$ 1,000 or equivalent

in Ngultrum subject to the ceiling prescribed below:

- Alcohol/Spirits – 2 bottles, each bottle not larger than one liter
- Perfume: 1 bottle, not larger than 2 ounces
- Gold (including jewellery) – 50 grams
- Silver (including jewellery) – 1 kilogram
- Clothing items: Maximum of 10 pieces each of type of clothing whether stitched or unstitched
- Other household or personal goods including electronics and bedding shall be limited to one piece each.
- Items of gifts and presents shall be included in the above free allowance.

Note: Baggage or goods in commercial nature shall not be considered as free baggage allowance even if the value of the goods is less than US\$ 1000 or equivalent Ngultrum.

FREE BAGGAGE ALLOWANCE FOR FOREIGN TOURIST

- Used personal effects and articles reasonably required for the visit provided items imported are for personal use and shall be re-exported upon leaving Bhutan.
- Import free of Customs duty, articles up to Ngultrum 10,000/- or equivalent, for personal use or as gifts and travel souvenirs if carried on the person or in the accompanied baggage, including spirit of not more than two liters and perfume of not more than 100 ml.
- High value articles and sports items as approved and imported in reasonable quantities shall be considered under temporary admission considering that the articles or items are re-exported on leaving Bhutan.

LIST OF RESTRICTED GOODS:

- Arms and Ammunitions
- Gold and Silver in excess of free baggage allowance
- Explosives and explosives devices
- Medicinal products including narcotics and psychotropic substance for medical use
- Other narcotics and psychotropic substances and precursor
- Animal and their parts and products including food
- Plants, their parts (seeds/fruits/flowers/shoots/roots/ tissues) and products
- Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) and their products
- Industrial and toxic wastes and residues
- Wireless and remote sensing telecommunication and broadcasting equipment
- Scraps
- Used or second hand goods, vehicles, machinery and equipment
- Chemical and Fertilizers
- Plastic packing materials
- Valuable cultural properties
- Ozone Depleting substances
- Intellectual property rights
- Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS)/Drones

Note: A tourist can bring US\$10,000 or equivalent without declaring. If the amount exceeds US\$10,000, it must be declared at the customs.

LIST OF PROHIBITED GOODS:

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

- Narcotics and psychotropic drugs and substances
- Pornographic materials
- Animals and plants classified as endangered species and their parts and products



Department of Revenue and Customs
Ministry of Finance

Unlock Special MICE DISCOUNT



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Incentives

Conferences

Exhibitions

MICE Group	Discount Level
15 pax or more	15% Off

* Terms and Conditions Apply

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www.drukair.com.bt

**The discount is applicable to all MICE participants with SDF waiver (MICE) approval from the Department of Tourism, as per the SOP on their website (bhutan.travel/travel-trade)*

Key Information



Bhutan’s breathtaking landscapes and diverse terrains make it a paradise for trekking enthusiasts. From challenging high-altitude treks to scenic and moderate trails, there are various trekking options to explore the natural beauty and cultural heritage of Bhutan. Here are some popular trekking routes to consider:

Druk Path Trek: This trek is a great introduction to Bhutan's natural and cultural wonders. It takes you from Paro to Thimphu, passing through stunning alpine meadows, rhododendron forests, and serene mountain lakes. Along the way, you can also visit ancient monasteries and enjoy panoramic views of the Himalayas.

Jomolhari Trek: Considered one of the most beautiful treks in Bhutan, the Jomolhari Trek offers a challenging yet rewarding experience. It takes you to the base camp of Mount Jomolhari, the second highest peak in Bhutan. The trail passes through remote villages, pristine valleys, and high mountain passes, offering stunning views of snow-capped peaks.

Snowman Trek: For experienced trekkers seeking an ultimate adventure, the Snowman Trek is an epic journey that traverses through Bhutan's remote and untouched wilderness. It is one of the most challenging treks in the world, taking about 27 days to

complete. The trail leads through high mountain passes, pristine lakes, and remote villages, showcasing Bhutan's pristine beauty.

Trans Bhutan Trail Trek: The Trans Bhutan Trail is a 403km route, spanning from Haa in the West of Bhutan to Trashigang in the East. It is considered one of the world's greatest walks and one of the best hiking routes in Asia. The trail traverses through remote villages, ancient monasteries, terraced fields, dense forests, and pristine alpine meadows, providing a comprehensive glimpse into the country’s natural beauty and cultural heritage.

Bumthang Cultural Trek: This trek combines nature and culture, taking you through the beautiful Bumthang Valley, known as the cultural heartland of Bhutan. You can visit ancient temples, monasteries, and remote villages, while enjoying the scenic landscapes of green valleys, pristine forests, and farmlands.

Dagala Thousand Lakes Trek: Offering breathtaking views of high mountain passes and numerous glacial lakes, the Dagala Thousand Lakes Trek is a moderate trek suitable for all fitness levels. The trek takes you through alpine meadows, yak herders' camps, and serene lakes, providing ample opportunities for photography and nature exploration.

Before embarking on any trek in Bhutan, it is essential to obtain the necessary permits and hire a licensed guide. The best time for trekking in Bhutan is during spring (March to May) and autumn (September to November) seasons when the weather is favorable and the landscapes are at their most vibrant.

Other Treks in Bhutan

Bumdra Trek	Rodung La Trek
Bumthang Owl Trek	Samtengang Winter Trek
Gangtey Trek	Soi Yaktsa Trek
Laya Gasa Trek	Salt Route Trek
Merak Sakteng Trek	Sinchula Trek
Nabji Korphu Trek	

Driving Time Between Various Places in Bhutan (For tourists)

FROM	TO	DISTANCE (KM)	DRIVING TIME (APPROX)
Thimphu	Paro	49.9	1 hr
Thimphu	Phuentsholing	146.2	4 hrs
Phuentsholing	Bagdora	154.7	4 hrs
Thimphu	Wangduephodrang	70	3 hrs
Thimphu	Punakha	77	3 hrs
Punakha	Wangduephodrang	13	45 min
Wangduephodrang	Trongsa	129	4 hrs 30 min
Trongsa	Bumthang	68	2 hrs
Bumthang	Mongar	193	7 hrs
Mongar	Lhuentse	75	3 hrs
Mongar	Trashigang	91	3 hrs 30 min
Trashigang	Chorten Kora	51	2 hrs
Trashigang	Samdrup Jongkhar	180	7 hrs
Samdrup Jongkhar	Guwahati	110	3 hrs
Samdrup Jongkhar	Phuentsholing	400	10 hrs
Thimphu	Gelephu	243	6 hrs 30 min
Phuentsholing	Gelephu	196.6	4 hrs 45 min

Festival Dates for 2025

FESTIVAL NAME	FESTIVAL LOCATION	FESTIVAL DATE
Punakha Drupchen	Punakha	Mar 6 - 8
Punakha Tshechu	Punakha	Mar 9 - 11
Bhutan International Marathon	Annual Event, Gasa-Punakha	Mar 4
Gomphukora	Trashigang	Apr 5 - 7
Talo Tshechu	Talo, Punakha	Apr 5 - 7
Gasa Tshechu	Gasa	Apr 5 - 7
Zhemgang Tshechu	Zhemgang	Apr 5 - 7
Haa Spring Festival	Haa	Apr 7 - 9
Paro Tshechu	Paro	Apr 8 - 12
Chhorten Kora	Trashiyangtse	Mar 14 and Mar 29
Rhododendron festival	Lampelri Botanical Garden, Dochula	April 22 - 24
Ura Yakchoe	Ura, Bumthang	May 9 - 13
Kurje Tshechu	Choekor, Bumthang	Jul 5
Mushroom Festival	Genekha, Thimphu	Aug 15 - 16
Tour of the Dragon Bicycle Race	Bumthang-Thimphu	Sept 6
Thimphu Drupchen	Thimphu	Sep 28
Paro Dromche	Paro	Sep 28
Wangdue Tshechu	Wangduephodrang	Sep 30 - Oct 2
Thimphu Tshechu	Thimphu	Oct 2 - 4
Tamshing Phala Choepa	Tamshing, Bumthang	Oct 2 - 4
Gangtey Tshechu	Gangtey, Phobjikha Valley	Oct 5 - 7
Jhomolhari Mountain Festival	Dangochang (Jhomolhari Base Camp)	Oct 14 - 15
Royal Highland festival	Laya, Gasa	Oct 23 - 24
Chukha Tshechu	Chukha	Oct 29 - 31
Jakar Tshechu	Choekor, Bumthang	Oct 29 - 31
Dechenphu Tshechu	Thimphu	Oct 31
Jambhay Lhakhang Drup	Choekor, Bumthang	Nov 5 - 8
Black Necked Crane Fest.	Phobjikha Valley	Nov 11
Mongar Tshechu	Mongar	Nov 28 - 30
Trashigang Tshechu	Trashigang	Nov 29 - Dec 1
Pemagatshel Tshechu	Pema Gatshel	Oct 29 - Nov 1
Rangtse Nye Festival	Haa	Dec 1 - 2
Druk Wangyel Tshechu	Dochula	Dec 13
Trongsa Tshechu	Trongsa	Dec 27 - 31
Lhuentse Tshechu	Lhuentse	Dec 27 - 31

National Holidays 2025

2 Jan	Winter Solstice (Nyilo)
30 Jan	Traditional Day of Offering
21-23 Feb	Birth Anniversary of His Majesty the King
28 Feb-1 Mar	Losar New Year
2 May	Birth Anniversary of Third Druk Gyalpo
7 May	Zhabdrung Kuchoe
11 Jun	Lord Buddha's Parinirvana
5 Jul	Birth Anniversary of Guru Rinpoche
28 Jul	First Sermon of Lord Buddha
23 Sep	Blessed Rainy Day
28 Sep	Thimphu Drupchen Dromchoe
2-4 Oct	Thimphu Tshechu
2 Oct	Dashain Festival
1 Nov	Coronation of His Majesty the King
11 Nov	Birth Anniversary of Fourth Druk Gyalpo
11 Nov	Descending Day of Lord Buddha
17 Dec	National Day

Negative list on movement of tourist within Bhutan

Prohibited Areas

Place	Dzongkhag
Chekha	Paro
Changju	Samtse
Singye Dzong	Lhuentse
Tobrang	Trashiyangtse
Takpang	Lhuentse
Singphey	Trashiyangtse
Tshampa	Bumthang
Beyond Haa Damthang	Haa

Restricted Areas

Place	Dzongkhag
Gunitsawa	Paro
Soi	Thimphu
Khatang	Bumthang
Lingzhi	Thimphu
Beyond Bumdeling	Trashiyangtse

***Note:** However, tourist will be allowed to visit restricted areas identified as trekking route by the Department of Tourism if accompanied by trekking guide.*

Average Temperature

Month	Figures in Centigrade	Paro	Thimphu	Punakha	Wangdue	Trongsa	Bumthang	Mongar	Trashigang	Gelephu
JAN	MAX	9.4	.3	16.1	17.0	13.0	10.8	15.5	20.4	24
	MIN	-5.8	-2.6	4.2	4.3	-0.2	-5.1	8.2	10.5	13
FEB	MAX	13.4	14.4	19.6	13.9	10.0	15.9	21.7	27	
	MIN	1.5	0.6	5.3	7.8	0.4	-1.4	8.3	11.5	15
MAR	MAX	14.5	16.4	21.12	22.8	16.7	16.2	20.0	24.8	32
	MIN	0.6	3.9	9.2	10.4	4.4	3.5	11.6	14.4	22
APR	MAX	17.6	20.0	24.4	26.2	20.1	18.7	2.8	28.3	32
	MIN	4.6	7.1	11.2	12.9	6.6	3.9	14.0	17.0	23
MAY	MAX	23.5	22.5	27.2	29.1	21.0	21.3	25.1	30.0	31
	MIN	10.6	13.1	14.2	17.7	11.6	9.5	17.4	20.6	25
JUN	MAX	25.4	24.4	31.2	29.2	22.2	22.5	26.1	30.7	31
	MIN	14.1	15.2	19.5	20.1	13.6	3.5	19.5	22.6	26
JUL	MAX	26.8	18.9	32.0	18.4	25.3	14.1	16.1	30.5	31
	MIN	14.9	13.4	21.6	16.2	15.3	10.9	15.8	23.1	26
AUG	MAX	25.3	25.0	31.4	29.1	23.8	23.0	25.4	30.2	32
	MIN	14.7	15.8	19.8	20.0	15.0	13.7	19.6	22.7	26
SEPT	MAX	23.4	23.1	29.9	27.5	22.6	21.6	24.7	30.0	31
	MIN	11.7	15.0	20.4	19.1	14.2	12.1	19.4	23.9	25
OCT	MAX	18.7	21.9	27.8	26.1	21.8	19.5	22.7	29.1	30
	MIN	7.4	12.4	18.9	14.7	11.7	5.9	15.8	17.7	22
NOV	MAX	13.9	17.9	22.3	22.6	19.8	16.1	19.9	26.1	28
	MIN	1.4	5.0	13.0	9.6	6.4	-0.5	11.2	13.6	17
DEC	MAX	11.2	14.5	15.0	19.1	18.2	12.3	15.7	23.0	25
	MIN	-1.7	-1.1	7.9	6.3	2.5	-2.3	9.5	11.6	14



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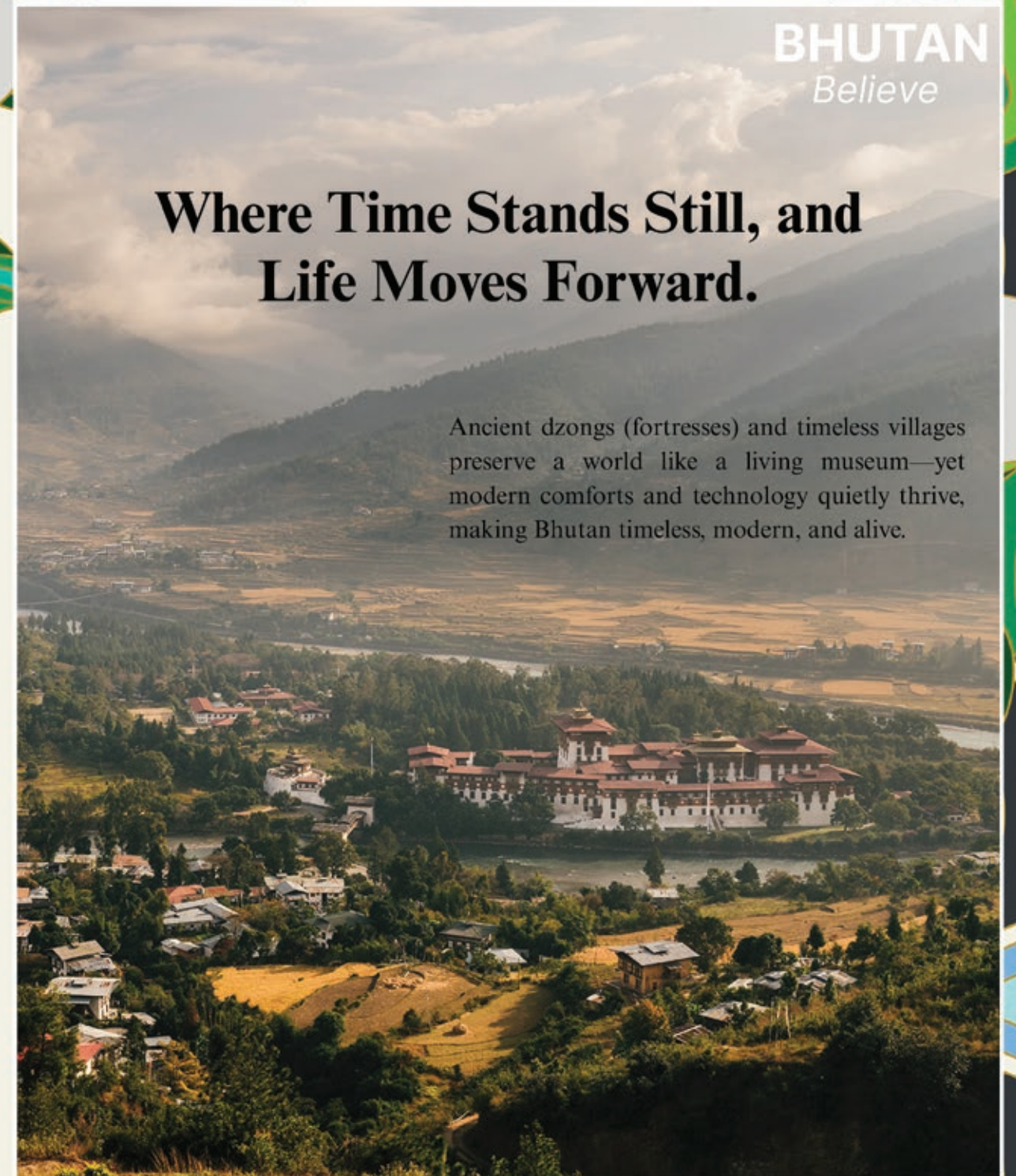


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Basic Dzongkha

INTRODUCTIONS

Greetings and well wishes

Kuzuzangpola

What is your name?

(for elders or with respect)

Na gi Tshen Ga Chi Mo?

What is your name?

(for friends)

Chhoey gi Ming Ga Chi Mo?

My name is

Ngegi Ming.....Ein

Where are you from?

Chhoey ga te lay mo?

How old are you?

Kay Lo gadem chi Ya si?



Good bye: Log Jay Gay.
(Meaning we will meet again)

TRAVEL TALK

Where does this road lead to?

Lam di ga thay jow mo?

Is it far?

Tha ring sa in-na?

Here : Na/ Nalu

There : Pha/ Phalu

Where? : Ga Tey?

Which? : Gadee?

In front of : Dongkha

Next to : Bolokha

Behind : Japkha



SHOPPING CONVERSATION

What time does it open?

Chutsho gademchi lu go pchiu mo?

What time does it close?

Chutsho gademchi lu go dam mo?

What is this? : Ani ga chi mo?

How much is it? : Dilu gadem chi mo?

That's too much : Gong bom may



Waiter! : Wai Chharo!
(literally meaning friend)

Waitress : Wai Bumo!
(literally meaning girl)

Please Have/ Eat : Zhey

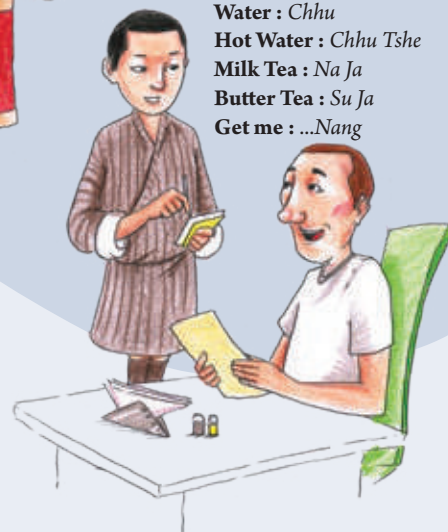
Water : Chhu

Hot Water : Chhu Tshe

Milk Tea : Na Ja

Butter Tea : Su Ja

Get me : ...Nang



TELEPHONE TETE-A TETE

Hello : Kuzoozangpo La

Who is speaking : Ga Sung Mo La?

I'm....Speaking : NgaZhu Do La

Yes, Yes : Ong, Ong

Yes in Affirmative : Ein Ein La

Roger/ Signing off : Las La. Laso La

It was tasty

Zhim bay (While making
a gesture of moving one's
forefinger in front of the cheek)



No more, thanks

Me Zhu (while making a gesture of moving
one's hand in front of the mouth)



Thank you
Kardrinchhey

EMERGENCY ESSENTIALS

I'm ill : Nga nau may

Where is the hospital?

Menkhang ga tey in na?

Where is the toilet?

Chhapsa ga tey in-na?



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