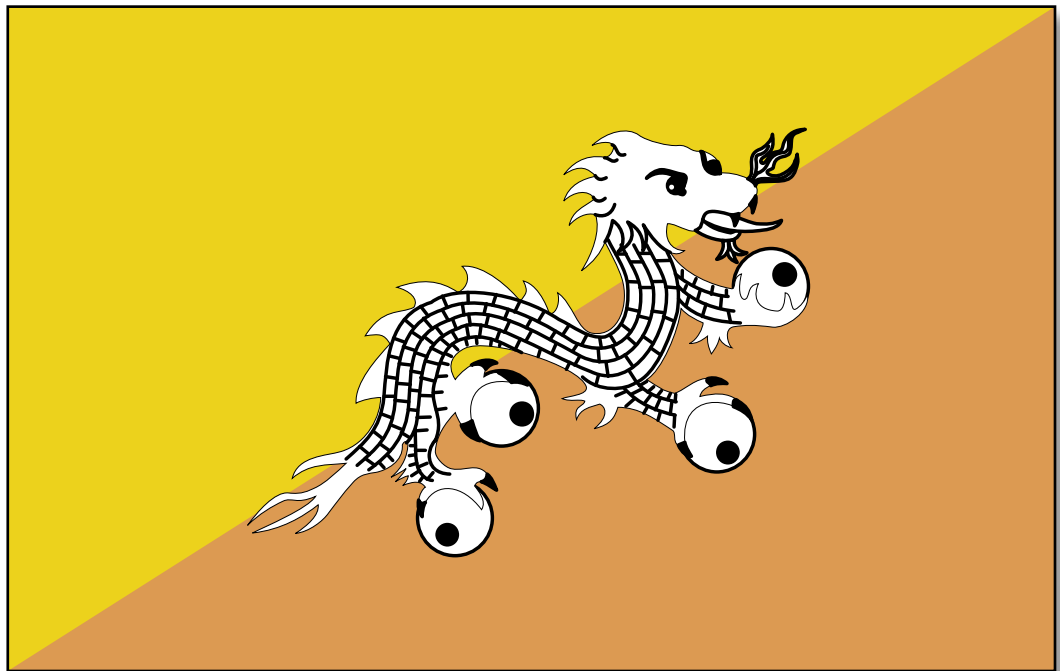


Bhutan



BHUTAN

Official Name:	Kingdom of Bhutan
Capital:	Thimphu
Area:	11,268 square miles (about the size of Vermont and New Hampshire combined)
Population:	2,005,000; some estimates as low as 600,000
Languages:	Dzongkha, various Tibetan dialects, Nepalese dialects
Religions:	75% Lamaistic Buddhism; 25% Indian and Nepalese influenced Hinduism
Life Expectancy:	Male: 53 years; Female: 52 years
Official Exchange Rate:	46.54 ngultrum = \$1



Description:

The flag of Bhutan (“Land of the Dragon”) features a dragon grasping jewels; this represents natural wealth and perfection. The white color is for purity and loyalty, the gold is for regal power, and the orange-red is for Buddhist sects and religious commitment.

National Anthem Of Bhutan

Royal Anthem

Druk tsendhen koipi gyelkhap na
Loog ye ki tenpa chongwai gyon
Pel mewang ngadhak rinpo chhe
Ku jurmey tenching chhap tsid pel
Chho sangye ten pa goong dho gyel
Bang che kyed nyima shar warr sho.

Adopted in 1953

Written by Gyaldun Dasho Thinley Dorji (1914-1966)

Translation

In the Thunder Dragon Kingdom
That is adorned with sandalwood,
The protector resides who guards the
Teachings of the dual system,
He, the precious and glorious ruler,
Makes wisdom to spread,
While his composed personality abides
In the stability of the land
As the doctrine of the Lord Buddha
flourishes,
May the sun of peace and happiness
Shine on the people!

Introduction

Bhutan, is a small, developing independent country in south central Asia. It lies in the eastern Himalayas between India and China.

Bhutan is a rugged, mountainous country with great extremes in climate. Thick forests grow on the rain drenched southern slopes of the mountains. It is extremely hot in the low foothill regions and extremely cold in the Great Himalayas. Only in the mid-Himalaya regions is the climate moderate.

Almost all Bhutanese are hardy mountaineers who farm and raise stock. They live in isolated valleys, cut off from one another by mountains. Bhutan had little contact with the rest of the world until the late 1950s. Thimphu, a town of about 9,000, is the capital of the country.

The country has been visited by a great many saints, mystics, scholars and pilgrims over the centuries who not only came for their personal development, but blessed the land and its people with an invaluable spiritual and cultural legacy that had shaped every facet of Bhutanese lives.



Visitors and guests to the country will be surprised that the culture and the traditional life style is still richly intact and at the degree to which it permeates all strands of modern day secular life. From the traditional woven garments to the prayer flags on high mountain slopes, from the religious masks to folk dances, this cultural heritage is proudly evident and offers a unique cultural setting.

Bhutanese have treasured their natural environment as it is seen as a source of all life and the abode of the gods and spirits. Buddhism has been the predominant religion since the seventh century and has inculcated deeply the value that all forms of sentient life, not just human life, are precious and sacred.

Given such a prevailing ethos, which respects the natural environment, it is not surprising that the Bhutanese have lived in harmony with nature. The country has been identified as one of the 10 biodiversity hot spots in the world and as one of the 221 global endemic bird areas. Its eco-systems harbor some of the most exotic species of the eastern Himalaya with an estimated 770 species of birds and over 50 species of rhododendron, besides an astonishing variety of medical plants and orchids. Bhutan also has a rich wildlife with animals like the snow leopard, blue sheep, tiger, water buffalo and elephant.

It is to safeguard this rich natural environment and culture, that the country has consciously adopted a controlled tourism and development policy. For the few who do travel to Bhutan, there are a wide variety of activities like snowman trek, panoramic mountain flight and a lot of colorful festivals.

History

- Dharma Raja of Tibetan lamas A.D. 1616-1950
- Tongsa Penlop becomes hereditary king 1907
- British control over Bhutan's external affairs 1910-1947
- Indian control over Bhutan's external affairs begins 1949
- A constitutional monarchy is established; the National Assembly has power to limit authority of king (1953)
- King Jigme Singe Wangchuk becomes king 1972
- Cautious modernization efforts begins; the Citizenship Act aims at limiting citizenship (1980s)
- Many Nepali immigrants are denied citizenship; demonstrators protest government policies towards Nepalis (1990s)
- Tens of thousands of Nepali residents of Bhutan remain in refugee camps in eastern Nepal as citizenship was denied to them
- Cautious modernization remains a priority of the government

Little is known of Bhutan's history. In the 800s C.E., Tibetan invaders conquered the Bhotia Tephoo – the country's original habitants – and settled in Bhutan.

By the early 1500s, descendants of the Tibetan invaders controlled Bhutan from a number of large dzongs (forts) located in the mid-Himalayan region. In the early 1600s, Bhutan became a separate state when a Tibetan lama took power as a ruler of both religion and state affairs. In 1907, Ugyen Wangchuk, a powerful penlop (territorial lord) was chosen to administer the government.

In the 1700s and 1800s, the Bhutanese raided Sikkim and part of what was then British India. These raids caused Great Britain to take control of some of Bhutan's foreign affairs.

In 1910, the British Indian Government took full control of Bhutanese foreign relations, but the British did not interfere with Bhutan's internal government.

In 1949, India agreed to handle Bhutan's foreign affairs and to help develop its economy. India later assumed responsibility for the defense of Bhutan.

Bhutan remained isolated from the rest of the world until 1959, when China claimed part of the country. Bhutan then strengthened its ties to India and began programs to modernize its economy, educational system, and public health facilities. In 1972, King Jigme Dorji Wangchuk died and was succeeded by his son, Jigme Singye Wangchuk.

Geography

Location: Southern Asia, between China and India

Area: Total: 18,146.71 square miles (about half the size of Indiana)

Land Boundaries: Total: 667.70 miles

Coastline: 0 mile (Landlocked)

Geographical Features: Mostly mountainous; some fertile valleys and savanna

Climate: Varies; tropical in southern plains; cool winters and hot summers in the central valleys; severe winters and cool summers in the Himalayas

Terrain: Mostly mountainous with some fertile valleys and savanna

Elevations Extremes:

Lowest point: Drangme Chhu 318.24 feet

Highest point: Kula Kangri 24780.18 feet

Natural Resources: Timber, hydropower, gypsum, calcium carbide

Forests and Woodland: 66%

Other: 26% (1993 est.)

Irrigated Land: 131.27 square miles (1993 est.)

Natural Hazards: Violent storms coming down from the Himalayas are the source of the country's name which translates as Land of the Thunder Dragon; frequent landslides during the rainy season.

Environment – Current Issues: Soil erosion, limited access to potable water

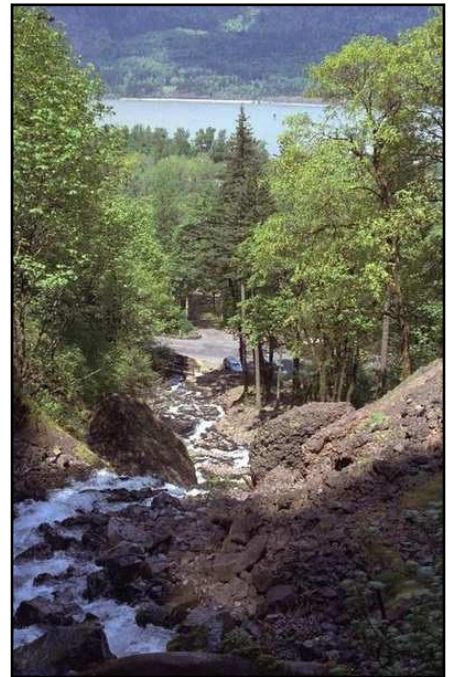
Land

Bhutan has three major land regions. A region of plains and river valleys lies along the Indian border in the south. It ranges from about 150 to 3000 feet (46 to 910 meters) above sea level. Bananas, citrus fruit and rice are grown in its hot and humid climate.

Mountains in the mid-Himalayan region, which lie north of the plains, rise to form 5,000 to 14,000 feet (1,500 to 4,270 meters) above sea level. Ash, oak, poplar and willow trees grow in this region's moderate climate.



Mountains in the great Himalaya, the northern most region, rise over 24,000 feet (7,320 meters). The climate above 14,000 feet (4,270 meters) is very cold. Snow and glaciers cover parts of this region all year.



The major mountain ranges extend from southeast to northwest across Bhutan. Rivers run from north to south, forming fertile valleys. A southwest summer monsoons (seasonal winds) bring 85% of the rainfall.

Flora and Fauna

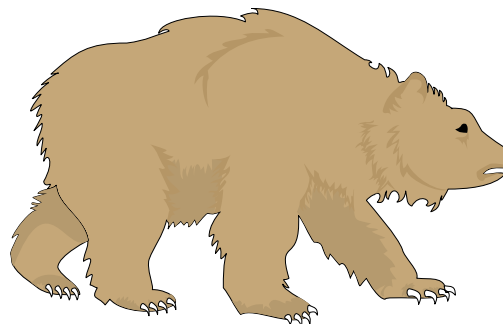
Bhutan is a botanical paradise. One of the ancient names given to Bhutan was “Southern Valleys of Medicinal Herbs.” Rhododendrons, junipers and magnolias several meters high, carnivorous plants, rare orchids, blue poppy (national flower), medicinal plants, giant rhubarb, high altitude plants, tropical trees, pine and oak are a few floras found in Bhutan.

Among the rare and exotic faunas found in Bhutan are Golden Langur, Red Pandas, Black-necked Crane, Snow Leopard, Takin, Musk Deer, Himalayan Brown Bear, Himalayan Marten, tigers, hornbills, pheasants, mountain goats and timid blue sheep.

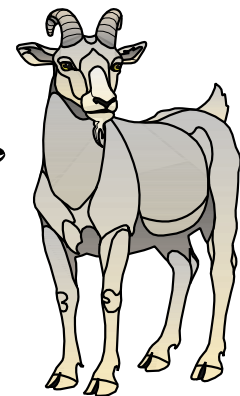
Bhutan is a land of soaring snowcapped peaks, alpine meadows and densely forested hills and ravine abounding in exotic flora and fauna. From May to August, hills are covered with an awesome variety of flowers decorated with waterfalls and streams gushing in wild abandon.



Magnolia



Bear



Mountain Goat

Government and Administration

Administrative division: 18 districts

Independence: August 8, 1949 (from India)

National Holiday: National Day (Ugyen Wangchuck became first hereditary king), December 17, 1907

Constitution: no written constitution or bill of rights; *Note:* Bhutan uses a 1953 Royal decree for the constitution of the National Assembly; on July 7, 1998, a Royal edict was ratified giving the National Assembly additional powers

Legal system: based on Indian law and English common law



The King of Bhutan

Suffrage: each family has one vote in village-level elections

Executive Branch: chief of state: King Jigme Wangchuck (since July 24, 1972)

Head of government: Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Sangay Ngedup (since 1999)

Cabinet: Council of Ministers (Lhengye Shungtsog) nominated by the monarch, approved by the National Assembly; members serve fixed, five-year terms; *Note:* there is also a Royal Advisory Council (Lodoi Tsokde), members nominated by the monarch.

Elections: none; the monarch is hereditary, but democratic reforms in July, 1998, gave the National Assembly authority to remove the monarch with two-thirds vote

Legislative Branch: National Assembly or Tshogdu (150 seats: 105 elected from village constituencies; 10 represent religious bodies; and 35 are designated by the monarch to represent government and other secular interests) members serve three-year terms

Bhutan is a hereditary (inherited) monarchy headed by a powerful king. The king appoints a prime minister and an advisory council to assist him. He also appoints one-fourth of the 130-member *Tsongdu* (national assembly). Village headmen elect members to represent powerful Buddhist monasteries. The assembly's chief duty is to advise the king. *Tsongdu* members serve five-year terms.

A *dzongtap* (district officer) is responsible for law and order in each of Bhutan's fifteen administrative divisions. Families in each village elect a headman to a three-year term. Bhutan has no legal political parties.

Economy

Facts

Currency (\$ U.S. Equivalent): 46.54 ngultrum = \$1

Natural Resources: Timber, hydropower, gypsum, calcium carbide

Agriculture: Rice, corn, root crops, citrus fruit, food grains, dairy products, eggs

Industry: Cement, wood products, distilling, food processing, calcium carbide, tourism

Exports: \$111 million (primary partners: India, Bangladesh)

Imports: \$136 million (primary partners: India, Japan, United Kingdom)

Overview

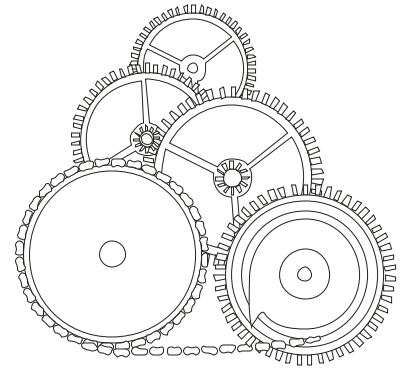
The economy, one of the world's smallest and least developed, is based on agriculture and forestry, which provide the main livelihood for more than 90% of the population. Agriculture consists largely of subsistence farming and animal husbandry. Rugged mountains dominate the terrain and make the building of roads and other infrastructure difficult and expensive.

Most Bhutanese are former sand stock raisers. Most farmers plant crops in fertile valleys or in irrigated terraces on mountain slopes. Barley, rice and wheat are the chief crops. Most people in the high mountain areas herd cattle and yaks. Some coal is produced in southern Bhutan.

The economy is closely aligned with India's through strong trade and monetary links. The industrial sector is technologically backward, and most production is of the cottage industry type. Most development projects, such as road construction rely on Indian migrant labor. Bhutan trades chiefly with India. It exports coal and rice and imports gasoline, kerosene and sugar.

Bhutan's hydropower potential and its attraction for tourists are key resources. The Bhutanese Government has made some progress in expanding the nation's productive base and improving social welfare. Model education, social, and environment programs in Bhutan are underway with support from multilateral development organizations. Each economic program takes into account the government's desire to protect the country's environment and cultural traditions. Detailed controls and uncertain policies in areas like industrial licensing, trade, labor, and finance continue to hamper foreign investment.

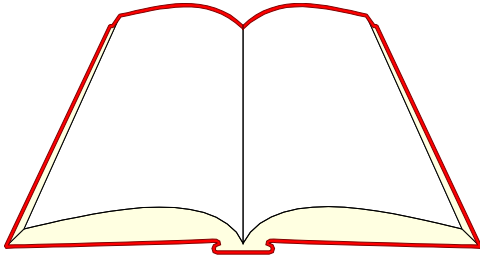
Until 1960, Bhutan lacked communication, power, and trained workers. Since then it has begun to modernize its economy and tie it closely to India. India has provided assistance by establishing livestock farms and fruit orchards. A hydroelectric power station has been built at Thimphu and another has been started in Paro. A distillery and food-preserving factory have been built. India has helped Bhutan to build roads and trained farmers and veterinarians. The government makes money by selling collectors postage stamps.



Education

Adult Literacy Rate: 54%

Literacy: total population: 42.2% (male: 56.2%; female:28.1%) (1995 est.)



In 1961, the tiny, sparsely populated, mountainous Kingdom of Bhutan opened its doors to the modern world with a far-reaching development strategy, which included a strong commitment to education. Since then, the government has built an educational delivery system providing largely free primary, secondary, and limited tertiary level schooling. This system consists of a year of pre-primary school, followed by six years of primary school, four years secondary school, and two years of junior college.

Altogether, approximately 92,000 students are enrolled in 312 schools and institutions. Today, nearly three-quarters of primary school-age children are enrolled and, in contrast to neighboring countries, nearly half are girls. The government expects to achieve universal primary education by 2007.

The World Bank announced the approval of a U.S. \$13.7 million equivalent credit for a Second Education Project in Bhutan on March 3, 1998. The goal of the Second Education Project is to provide high quality basic education — grades pre-primary levels through eighth — to a larger number of the country's children. The project is to focus on children from rural areas, where access to higher grade levels is highly constrained. It will construct and upgrade schools, improve teacher training and strengthen management support for the system. The International Development Association (IDA), the World Bank's concessionary lending affiliate, provided the credit. The project will substantially improve the physical infrastructure available to the basic education capacity of about 5,000 students, primarily at the junior secondary level.

The Second Education Project will also provide considerable support to the institutional and quantitative improvement of basic education through professional development, in service training, school guidance and support, and management strengthening at the central, district, and school levels.

The total cost of the project is estimated at \$21.2 million dollars, of which \$13.7 million will be provided to IDA, \$5.5 million by the Swiss Development Corporation and \$2.0 million by the government. The credit portion will be on standard IDA terms with a maturity of 40 years, including a grace period of 10 years.

Selected Development indicators in 1997 after the commencement of these projects were:

Primary School Enrollment: 73%

Combined Education Enrollment: 25%

Culture and Society

Population: 2,049,412 (July 2001 est.) **Note:** Other estimates range as low as 800,000

Annual Growth Rate: 2.2%

Birth Rate: 35.73 births per 1,000 population (2001 est.)

Death Rate: 14.03 deaths per 1,000 population (2001 est.)

Infant Mortality Rate: 108.89 deaths per 1,000 live births (2001 est.)

Life Expectancy at Birth: Total population: 52.79 years; male: 53.16 years; female: 52.41 years (2001 est.)

Total Fertility Rate: 5.07 children born per woman (2001 est.)

Rural/Urban Population Ratio: 94:6

Nationality: Bhutanese (singular and plural)

Ethnic Groups: Bhote 50%; ethnic Nepalese 35%; indigenous or migrant tribes 15%

Religions: Lamaistic Buddhist 75%; Indian and Nepalese-influenced Hinduism 25%

Languages: Dzongkha (official), Bhutanese speak various Tibetan dialects. Nepalese speak various Nepalese dialects.

Two-thirds of the people are the descendants of Tibetan settlers. About a fourth are settlers from Nepal. Other important groups include Hindus and people from India's Assam State and from Burma. Several languages are spoken in Bhutan. Dzongkha, Tibetan dialect, is the national language and is taught in the schools. The Nepalese speak Nepali.

All Bhutanese of Tibetan descent practice Buddhism which is Bhutan's official religion. About 4,500 lamas (monks) in Bhutan belong to the red robed order of the lamas. These monks perform important Buddhist rituals, treat illnesses and teach sacred doctrine. They live in fortified monasteries called *dzongs*, which have chapels, offices and teaching centers. Most of Bhutan's Nepalese practice Hinduism.

Bhutan's Hindus live in compact villages along the Indian border. They build rectangular houses of mud, blocks and stones. These are erected on high ground for protection against floods, wild animals and snakes.



People in the small villages of the mid-Himalaya valleys live in houses of oblong stone blocks that have pine fine shingle roofs. The family lives upstairs and uses the ground floor as a barn for cattle and storage. In the high northern mountain valleys, people live in small villages surrounded by stone walls. The people of Tibetan descent wear a long loose coat made from a colored blanket, gathered around the waist and hangs to the knees.

Dress

Bhutanese men wear a long robe hoisted knee length and tied around the waist by a belt called the *kera*. The women wear ankle length dress called the *kira*, made from beautifully colored and finely woven fabrics in traditional patterns. Necklaces are fashioned from corals, pearls, turquoise, and the precious agate eye stones which the Bhutanese call the “tears of the Gods.”



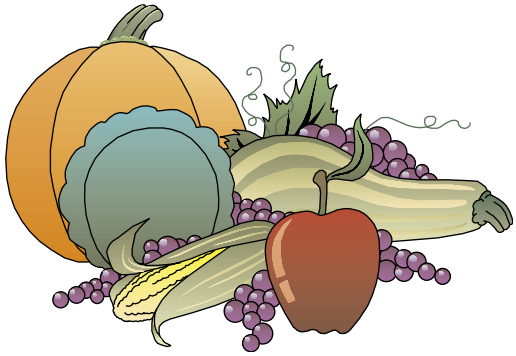
Way of Life

While urban settlements have sprung up with the process of modernization, the majority of the Bhutanese people still live in small rural villages. The Bhutanese diet is rich in meat, cereals (particularly unpolished rice) and vegetables. Meat dishes, mainly pork or beef, are lavishly doused in chilies. A common sight is the drying of red chilies on the rooftops in the sun. Salted butter tea, or *su ja*, is served at social functions. *Chang*, a local beer, and *ara*, a spirit distilled from rice, maize, wheat or barley, are common and widely favored. *Doma*, or betel nut, is offered as a customary gesture of greeting.



The Bhutanese way of life is greatly influenced by religion. People circumambulating the chortens with prayer beads and twirling prayer wheels are a common sight. Chortens are shrines enveloped by prayer flags and are built to remember dead monks. Every Bhutanese home has a special room used for prayers called a *choshum*.

Food

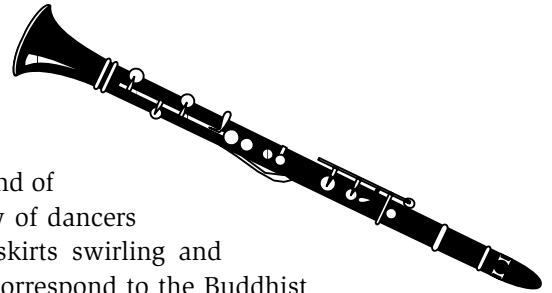


Bhutanese cuisine includes a variety of dishes: mainly red rice, meat (pork, beef, chicken, fish and yak), cottage cheese and lots of chilies. Most traditional dishes are fiery. The *ema-datshi*, a blend of chilies with cheese, could certainly be considered the national dish. Other traditional dishes include *puta*, buckwheat noodles; *hontay*, buckwheat dumplings with a cheese and spinach or cabbage filling; *momo*, flour dumplings filled with meat or cheese and cabbage filling; *suja*, salted butter tea; and *dheysee*, saffroned sweet rice.

Visitors can also be served food more suitable to western tastes ranging from Continental, Chinese to Indian. Bhutanese dishes are usually tempered a little to suit the palate of the newcomer. The adventurous can always request a taste of “the real thing.”

Music And Dance

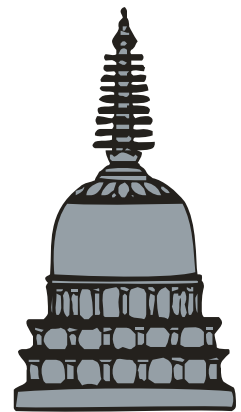
In all the Himalayas, the ancient dances of the region have been most faithfully preserved in Bhutan. The extraordinary grace and color of these energetic, dramatic dances is one of the visitor’s most vivid memories. To the fanfare of trumpets and the rhythmic sound of drums, cymbals, pipes and gongs, a rainbow of dancers whirl and bend and leap high in the air, skirts swirling and hands moving in the timeless gestures that correspond to the Buddhist rites. Here are the tales and legends of Buddhist history and mythology. Heroes vanquish demons. Believers drive out non-believers.



Folk songs and dances of the kingdom are rich and varied. The Bhutanese are a musical people. The low chanting of the monks, the sound of long horns echoing across the valley, lively processions, sacred dances and ancient folk dramas re-enacted are all a part of the intriguing pastiche of Bhutanese music.

Architecture

The castle-like dzongs with their gently tapering walls, classic lines, large courtyards and beautiful galleries are among the finest examples of Bhutanese architecture. As well as containing large monasteries, these impressive buildings, set in commanding positions on hilltops or at the confluence of rivers, are also the administrative centers of their regions. Overlooking the main buildings, small castle-like fortresses called *ta dzongs* (literally meaning watch towers) were built for defense. The *dzongs* have all been built in a formal pattern, handed down from generation to generation. No plans were drawn and no nails have been used. But the most common architectural sight in Bhutan are not these great buildings but *chortens* or *stupas*, small shrines built originally to house sacred relics, where the faithful patiently perform the pious act of circumambulation.

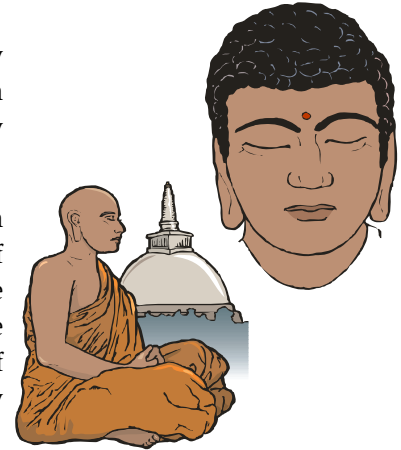


Stupa / Chorten

Religion

Bhutanese are a mongoloid race of people who originally migrated into and settled the country in the seventh century A.D. A nomadic and pastoral society at first, they gradually turned to agriculture in the fertile valleys.

There are three main ethnic groups – the *Ngalongs* in the western and central regions are the descendants of Tibetan immigrants who arrived in Bhutan from the ninth century. The *Sharchops* who live in the east of the country, are recognized as the original inhabitants of Bhutan. The third group is known as *Lhotshampas*. They represent the Nepali speaking ethnic group.



The State religion is *Drupka Kagyupa* a branch of Mahayana Buddhism. It has been institutionalized in the *Dratshang* (central monk body), headed by the Je Khenpo (Chief Abbot) who is chosen from the most learned lamas and enjoys an equal rank with the King. Bhutan is the only country in the world to have adopted Mahayana Buddhism in its Tantric form as its official religion.

The Buddhist faith has played and continues to play a fundamental role in the cultural, ethical and sociological development of Bhutan and its people. It permeates all strands of secular life.

Religious Festivals

Religious festivals are important events throughout the Tibetan Buddhist world—commemorating the deeds of Buddha or those of the great masters of the past associated with one Buddhist tradition or another.

In Bhutan, in addition to the standard Buddhist festivals, there are yearly festivals celebrated with great fanfare in each district. The most renowned of these are the *Tsechu* (10th day) festivals, commemorating the deeds of *Padmasambhava*. Locally referred to as “Guru Rimpoche” or, simply as “Guru”, this eighth century master introduced the *Nyingma* school of Buddhism into Tibet and Bhutan. Each 10th day of the lunar calendar is said to commemorate a special event in the life of *Padmasmbhav* and some of these are dramatized in the context of a religious festival.

Most festivals last from three to five days, one of which, usually falls on the 10th day of the lunar calendar.

The regional *Dzong* and remote village communities hold their distinct annual Tsechu festival providing the local populace with a wonderful occasion to dress up, gather together, and have fun in a convivial light-hearted atmosphere. It is also an occasion to renew their faith and receive blessings by watching the sacred dances, or receiving “empowerment” from a lama or Buddhist monk.



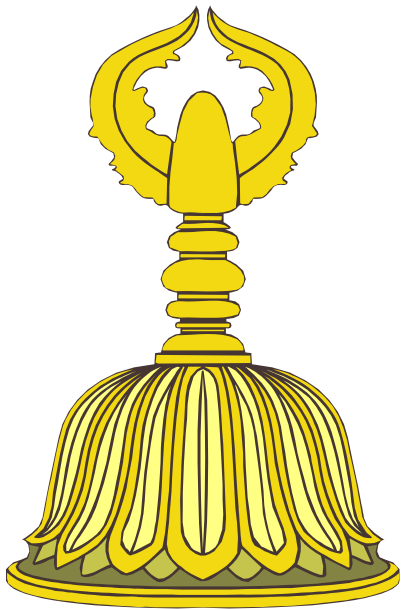
The dances, each aspect of which has a symbolic meaning, are performed by trained monks and laymen wearing ornate costumes, and, in some cases, impressive masks. At Paro, Wangdu, Mongar and Tashigang, among other places, a large “*thangka*” scroll known as a *Tongdrol* is exhibited for a few hours, at day break of the final day of the festival, enabling the people to obtain its blessing, since such scrolls’ confer liberation by the mere sight of them.

Of these festivals the *Paro Tsechu*, in the spring, and the *Wangue* and *Thimpu Tsechus*, in the fall, are the most impressive. These festivals are very popular with western tourists. The festivals in Bumthang and East Bhutan attract fewer tourists and those who want to get a more authentic flavor of Bhutan’s cultural and religious extravaganza will be well rewarded.

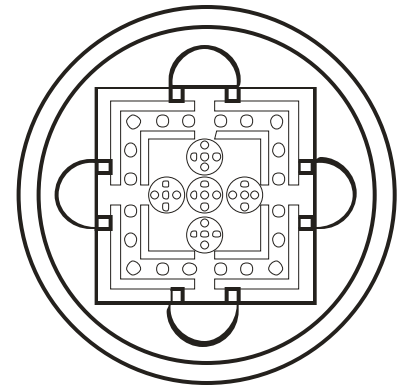
These festivals attract a lot of western tourists and hotels and flights are sold out months in advance to organized tourist groups. Anyone who wishes to visit Bhutan during these festivals should plan and make their tour arrangements well in advance.

Arts And Crafts

In the high Himalayan mountains, colors take on an intensity and beauty that often seem almost unreal to the observer. The deep green of the valleys and hillsides, the crystal clear rivers and streams, the clearness of the blue sky and the snow capped peaks of the mighty Himalayas are the backdrop of the Bhutanese artist. They use a myriad of colors that not only spring from nature but are also from a rich religious heritage. In Buddhism, the contemplation and visualization of color is an integral part of meditation and worship, bringing the believer closer to the goal of enlightenment.



Transcendental reality is also believed to be experienced in the form of light. From the mystic patterns of the *Mandala*, to the swirling costumes of the mask dancers, to the ornate galleries of the *dzongs* (monasteries), the artists of Bhutan celebrate color in its most vivid and expressive form. As art is a form of meditation, the artist never signs his name on any of his work.



The skill of Bhutanese craftsmen in working with bronze, silver and other fine metals is seen in a multitude of ways. Statues of deities, doors and pillars of temples, bells, trumpets, swords, candlesticks, boxes, jewelry and tea pots are but a few examples. Sculpting of religious statues is an important art and every temple contains large images of the Buddha and his saints.

Places Of Interest

Western Bhutan

Western Bhutan is known for its stunning scenery with rice paddies cascading down magnificent mountains, the pristine rivers that flow through the main towns of Paro, Thimphu and Punakha, and unique two-story houses with brightly painted window designs.

National Museum

The museum's collection includes ancient Bhutanese arts and artifacts, weapons and stamps, birds and animals, and an incredible collection of silver tea ware. This is typical of the eclectic beauty of Bhutan – its prized objects bear little relation to each other but as a whole stand together as a history of one of the world's most pristine people.

Taksang Monastery.

It is said that Guru Rinpoche (Precious Master), the father of the Bhutanese sect of Mahayana Buddhism, arrived in Paro Valley more than a millennium ago on the back of a legendary tigress. He meditated for three months in a cave where a monastery was later built and called *Taktsang Lhakang* or Tiger's Nest.

Valleys of Scenic Beauty

There are many small towns that are in the beautiful valleys. Some of them are Thimpu., Dochu, Wangdue Phodrang Dzong.



Hiking

For the mountain climbing enthusiasts, there are numerous routes ranging from low (9,840 ft.) to medium (10,000 ft.) to very high altitude (14,400 ft.). There are agencies that organize hiking for tourists. A few of the best treks are orchid trek, medicinal plant trek and bird watching trek.

Bhutan Facing Challenges

The government has undertaken an education program, but the literacy rate in Bhutan remains one of the lowest in South Asia. With India's help, Bhutan has increased the country's energy potential. The largest of six new hydroelectric generators, the 336-megawatt Chuka Hydroelectric Project, was financed by the Indian Government. It was completed in 1987, and now exports \$25 million worth of electricity to India annually.

Bhutan's forestry reserves are extensive but remain virtually unexploited. Even tourism is being developed on a very modest scale.

The present government policy is to develop the country's economy so as not to undermine the traditional Buddhist life of the majority of its people. It is also concerned about maintaining Bhutan's dramatically beautiful environment. Twenty percent of the country has been set aside for preservation. The Royal Manas National Park, a 165-square-mile sanctuary established along the southern border of Bhutan, is designed to protect the natural wildlife of South Asia. Many of the creatures that find refuge there are among the world's endangered species.



The emphasis on preserving Bhutan's heritage and protecting its environment has slowed the impact of modern advances on the lives of the people of Bhutan.

Bhutan is facing many severe challenges as it seeks to adopt the positive aspects of a modern industrial society while maintaining the values of its rich natural and religious heritage. Part of the problem is that greater industrialization requires more labor. Ninety-five percent of the workforce of Bhutan is employed in subsistence farming on the 16% of the land that is available for cultivation and pasture.

To provide the labor needed to develop industry, the country has had to import workers from neighboring Nepal and India. Their very presence challenges the indigenous people's attempt to create a Bhutanese national identity out of the exclusive cultural characteristics of the dominant Buddhist community. Even though this influx of workers from neighboring nations have added to the cultural diversity of Bhutan, it has been a source of tension among various groups. In spite of the governments' efforts to promote national unity the distinctively northern tradition of language and customs has emerged as dominant.

This policy has been particularly hard on the Nepali population, who has settled mostly in the southern part of the country. Although the government's intent is to promote political unity, its efforts have led to political unrest, terrorist attacks on schools and other public buildings, and deportations. Tens of thousand of people have fled Bhutan and are now living in refugee camps in the eastern part of Nepal. The governments of Nepal and Bhutan are working together to find a solution to this difficult situation.

Significantly, in this age of democracy, the role of the enlightened monarch, King Jigme Singye Wangchuk, appears to be the most promising in leading to a resolution of the cultural and political tensions created by modernization.

Development

Bhutan's economy is based on agricultural self-sufficiency and barter. More than 95% of the workforce is in the agricultural sector. Bhutan is among the poorest countries in the world. The government is cautiously developing the country's vast hydropower potential and a modest tourist industry.

Freedom

In this traditional society, thinly dispersed across rugged mountain slopes, the king instituted political reform in 1952 by creating an advisory National Assembly, the Tshoghdud. The Assembly has enacted various laws that repress Nepali and Indian residents.

Health and Welfare

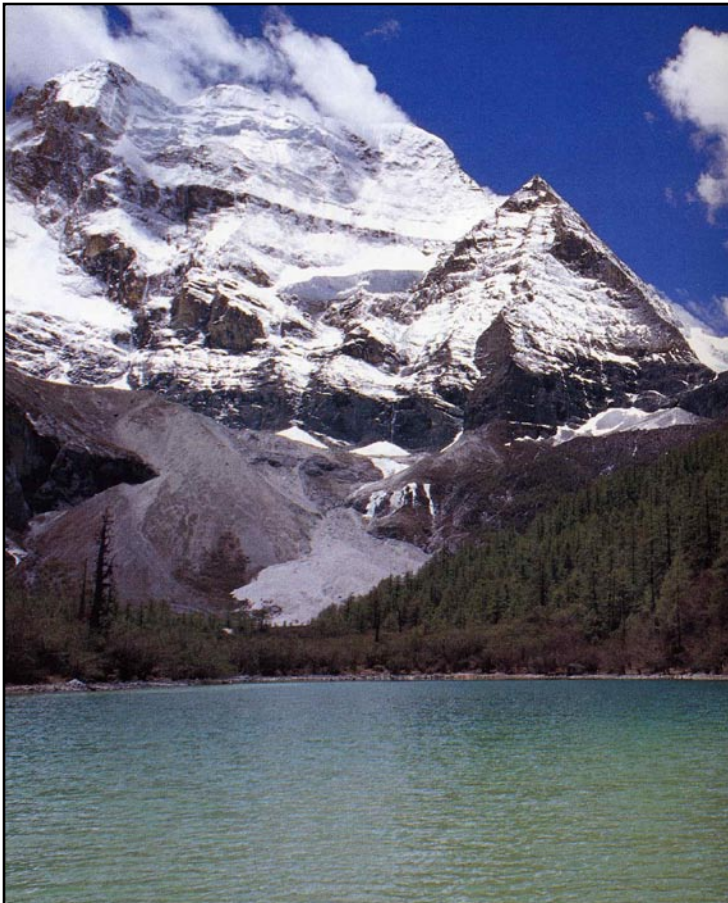
Health services are meager, and the expectation is that the family unit will remain the primary source of social welfare. The annual birth rate is a significant 2%, but the level of infant mortality is also high. The average life expectancy among the Bhutanese people is only about 52 years.

The family and the village have the primary responsibility for the welfare of the people. In the 1950s, the king instituted a program of social work for monks living in the country's numerous state-supported monasteries.

Achievements

Twenty percent of the country has been set aside for the preservation of its vast forest and for wild life reserves. Efforts at reform are done in the context of maintaining Bhutan's unique and distinctive Buddhist cultural heritage.

Rural Bhutan



The first thing a visitor to Bhutan will notice is the great expanse of green, forested hillsides. A drive or trek through the countryside of Bhutan will take you from the subtropical forests over high alpine passes and down to broad valleys with colorfully painted houses scattered across the landscape.

Magic Tag

Playing area: A Large outdoor space

Number of players: Four or more

One player is chosen to be IT. IT announces that stone, iron or wood or any other thing in the surroundings, will have magic powers during the game. A player touching anything, made of the magic substance cannot be tagged. It is considered bad sportsmanship for a player to touch a magic substance for too long and sometimes players make rules about how long a person can touch the magic substance and how many times.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Story of Buddha

The Buddha's miraculous powers angered one person; his cousin Devadatta. He too joined the disciple, but he was more jealous than ever of his cousin. He offered to manage the Buddha's disciples, but the Buddha recognized Devadatta's evil nature and refused.

Enraged, Devadatta hired thirty-one criminals to kill Buddha, but they were so affected by the great man's loving kindness that they could not raise a hand against him, and became his disciples instead.

Devadatta then set loose a crazed elephant that raged down the street where the Buddha was begging for food. But the power of the Buddha's peace and love calmed and tamed the heart of the beast.

What is the moral of the story?

Name: _____ Date: _____

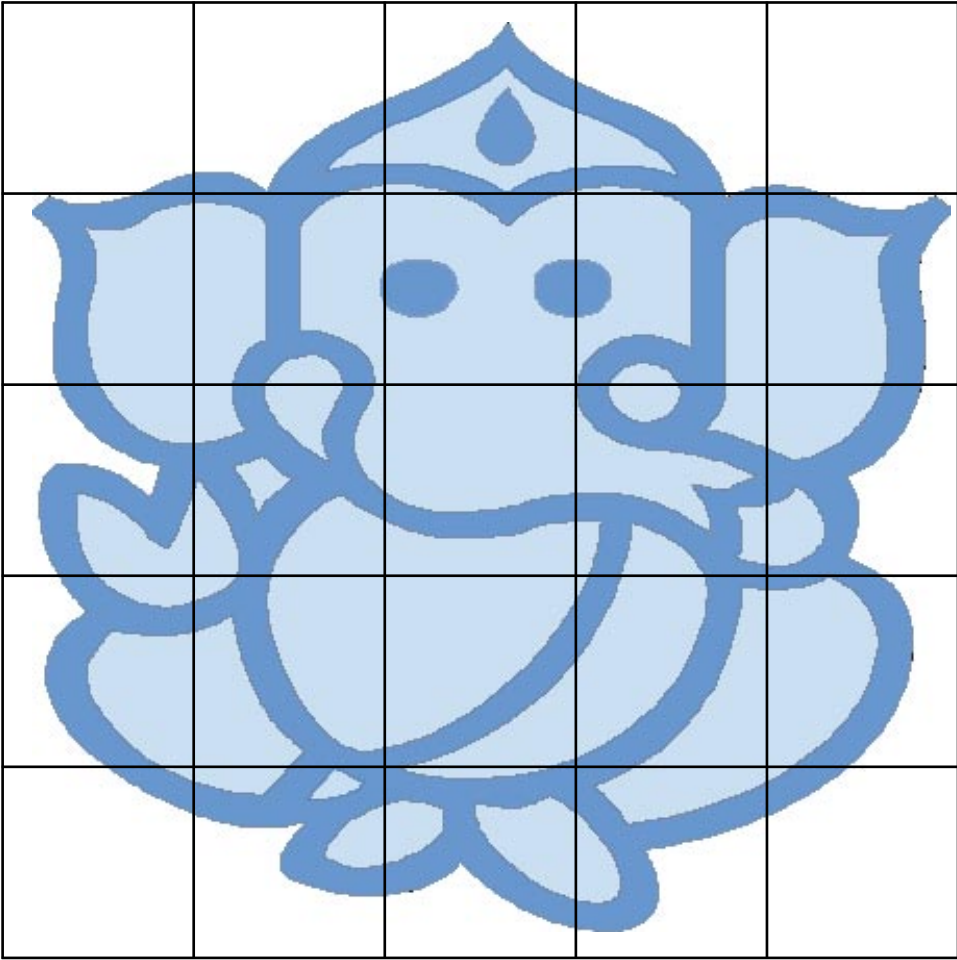
Buddha Coloring Project



Name: _____ Date: _____

Drawing Elephant Design

Follow the grid and draw the elephant on the next page. Color your drawing.



Your Drawing
