

TAKE ACTION: BUDDHISM, BHUTAN AND ME



Rinzin Jurmey grew up in the small mountain village of Sakteng and, at the age of 11, made the independent choice to leave the life of a mountain shepherd behind and move to a monastery to become a Buddhist monk. In **BUDDHISM, BHUTAN AND ME**, Rinzin reflects on this choice, and on his beloved country of Bhutan, which, like Rinzin himself, is caught between two worlds. Just as Rinzin moves harmoniously between mountain village and monastery, Bhutan too is forging a new cultural path, incorporating ancient traditions while embracing the exciting developments of the modern world.

Now 18, Rinzin travels with BYkids films mentors, from his monastery back home to his mountain village, and then to the city, documenting the various aspects of tradition and pop culture, education, politics, religion and hip-hop, prayer and video games – and learning how all of these can exist together. When thinking about these issues, **consider Articles 1, 17, 18, and 26 in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights:**

Article 1:

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 17:

(1) Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

Article 18:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 26:

(1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

(2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

(3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

For Teachers: Research

Bhutan is a Buddhist country with a long, rich cultural history. And yet many of its citizens and members of its leadership are looking outward, to more modernized countries like the US, and forward, to envision a new future for its people. Ask your students to research the Buddhist concept of non-duality, which is quoted in the film by Siok Sian Pek-Dorji, the Executive Director of the Bhutan Center for Media and Democracy, and consider how this concept might relate to the struggle of the Bhutanese to find a place in the modern world while maintaining their cultural traditions. Is it possible to do both? What are the tensions that arise from this unique struggle? How is Bhutan endeavoring to do so, specifically as shown in the country's policies, educational systems, and more?

For Students: Reflect

Rinzin touches on both the positive and negative influences social media and the internet have on him and his friends. Do you agree or disagree with him? Siok Sian Pek-Dorji also talks about the effect of “nonstop entertainment” on youth in Bhutan, with “parents vying” for their children’s attention. Do you see both the positives and negatives to social media, the internet and material possessions in your own life? In your academic successes and failures? In your relationships? Is it possible to maintain personal enlightenment, confidence, and happiness in traditional Bhutanese ways while also enjoying modern media?

For All Of Us: Respond

1. Host a community or private screening of BUDDHISM, BHUTAN AND ME to raise awareness of Bhutanese culture and how storytelling through film can help expose us to global issues. Email info@bykids.org for more information.
2. Sign a petition or start one of your own to raise awareness of the Kingdom of Bhutan and global policies that affect Bhutan, such as this one, which asks that journalists in Bhutan use and preserve the native language of Bhutan, Dzongkha, at: www.change.org/p/prime-minister-of-bhutan-all-journalists-in-bhutan-must-be-able-to-speak-in-national-language-dzongkha.
3. Initiate a mindful meditation practice program in your school. Go to www.edutopia.org/blog/pause-refocus-assess-meditation-classroom-adam-kuranishi for resources and more information.
4. Culture is very important to the Bhutanese. Put together a cultural show at your school that highlights Bhutan’s folklore, art, dress, dance and cultural heritage.
5. Follow Bhutan’s boyband, The Crowners, on social media and bring attention to their artistry. Visit www.instagram.com/crowners_boyband_official/.
6. Listen to “Hello from Bhutan!,” the first podcast out of Bhutan, to learn “everything you should know and did not know you should know from the land of Gross National Happiness.” <https://open.spotify.com/show/4uX9Hh8yE6RNYEY2BC7RcK?si=oAKvSKHeRWGt4VDmxvraJw>.

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