

TRANSCRIPT:

Buddhism, Bhutan, and Me

a BYkids film
THEIR WORLD THEIR FILMS



Rinzin: My name is Rinzin Journey and I am 18 years old. I was 11 when I knew I was going to become a monk.

The monastery where I study is called Lhodrak Kharchu Dratshang.

I like everything about being a monk, especially performing the rituals.

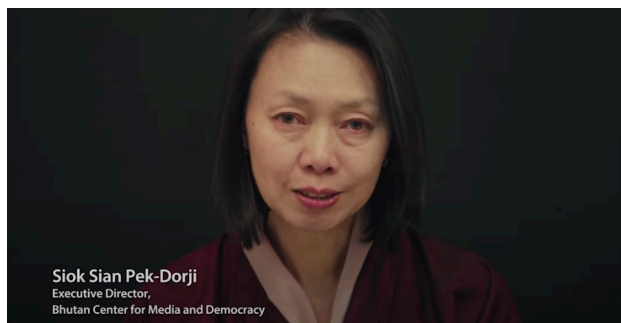
[Monks Singing]

To join a monastery as a monk, we have to first seek permission from the head abbot of the monastery. Once we are given permission to join the monastery, we have to follow each and every rule and regulation. For example: shaving your head, taking the oath.

When I handled the camera for the first time in making this film, I was a little nervous, but I gained confidence.

Since I was a kid, I dreamed of becoming a Buddhist scholar or teacher after completing my studies in the monastery. And if I couldn't do that, I'd become a Buddhist traditional medicine doctor.

When I heard the life story of the great Cotton Clad Yogi, Jetsun Milarepa, and the way he attained enlightenment, I was moved and inspired. So I decided I would become a monk. It was not my parents' decision.



**Siok Sian Pek-Dorji - Executive Director,
Bhutan Center for Media and Democracy:**

Bhutan being a small kingdom of less than a million people, it's important that we understand where we are and what we're doing and how we move on with life in the 21st century.

Buddhism keeps talking about non-duality; we cannot have the good without the bad, we cannot have tradition without modernity because if you're not progressing then how do you

know what's our tradition and the other way around. The question we should be asking ourselves is, "How can we be modern and yet be confident about ourselves a Bhutanese.

Rinzin: I think the social networks and internet disturb our studies, especially Facebook and online games, which come into my mind while I study.

Siok Sian Pek-Dorji: It's not black and white it's how we find the balance that's the challenge.

Rinzin: The advantages are, we can learn and do research by browsing Google and YouTube for the things we don't know.

I am from Sakten, one of the most remote villages in [eastern Bhutan, in the Trashigang District](#). I have two sisters and a mother back home.

When I returned to my village for the first time after becoming a monk, I was happy to see my family, because I missed them. It was a little difficult the first time I left my family, but gradually I got used to it after spending time with my friends. It got better then.

If my parents had kept me at home but not in school, I would have lived my life looking after yaks. Or else, if my parents had put me in school, I would have managed to get some job and would have lived my life doing some job.

Rinzin's Friend:[waking Rinzin]: Rinzin!

Rinzin: City life is interesting because I can see so many unique buildings and cars, which is awesome and I'd never seen such things in my life.

Siok Sian Pek-Dorji: Today's 20 year olds are the first generation of Bhutanese that grew up with the modern media. Children are consumed by non-stop entertainment and parents are vying for their attention.

Today, global stories of material success are rapidly replacing Bhutanese stories of contentment, basically telling Bhutanese that, you know, confidence comes from owning material things.

That is the challenge we're meeting and facing and confronting every day in Bhutan.



Bhutanese Rapper: 10:30

Started off as a loser and no one liked me
Before they considered me as a joke you see.
Cabling four is to go back home
Crying, "I don't wanna go to school.
They bully me, Mom.
For them, I'm not cool."
I wanna be cool [with] what I'm feeling with them, too.
[...] but maybe deep down
'Cause an empty vessel makes more noise.

Rinzin: It was a good experience for me when I visited the city with my film team. I was always interested in doing film work, but had no idea how.

Druk Generation Dancer: After the crew was formed my life changed completely. I've been dancing for almost like six years and I learned dancing through watching dance tutorials on YouTube and other social media.



Rinzin: I really enjoyed watching them dance.

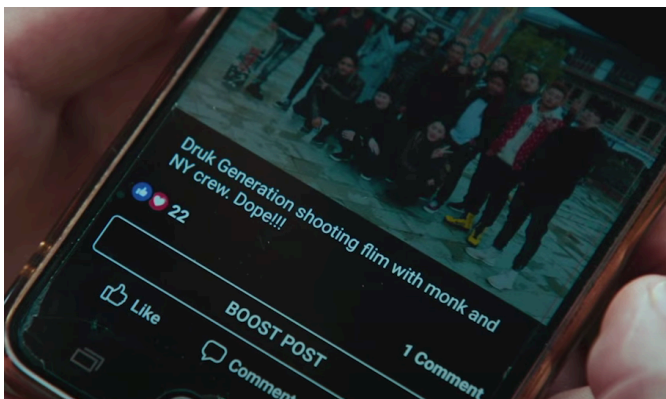
Druk Generation Dancer: The way we dress up they think that we are gangsters and they don't believe in us. They think that we are trash.



Druk Generation Dancer 2: Our parents do not support us for what we do because in Bhutan we lack the opportunity for dancing.

But in reality, dancing saved us. In that way, it was the opportunity.

Druk Generation Dancer: I could share my feelings. I could share my pain. I question my happiness to my crew members. I can also, like, help them, guide them, by listening to their stories. It makes me strong to believe that we can change the dancing scene in Bhutan so that future dancing can compete on an international level.



Rinzin: I was happy to meet the dancers in the city, since I'm also interested in dancing, and I also got to film them.

Siok Sian Pek-Dorji: This kingdom is really blessed but it's also the last independent Vajrayana Buddhist country. What would the world lose, you know, if our culture disappeared? Is the fact

that it would lose a very important aspect of global humanity.

Rinzin: Later, I would like to visit the city again. I wish to understand more about city life.

Siok Sian Pek-Dorji: There are very, very few quiet places left on Earth. And very, very few places where the average person still generally seeks enlightenment and contentment rather than just, you know, consumption and to feel good for myself.

You know, we're not all that special, you know? But the truth is the special things in Bhutan are so simple. Right? It's like just a quiet walk.

So we are at the precipice. It all depends on which path we take.

Lyonpo Norbu Wangchuk - Former Minister of Education: In the [Bhutanese] Constitution, it imposes as a duty for every citizen to ensure that the culture is preserved and promoted. So in our education system, in our schools, culture is a strong component of the learning that takes place



We have the Buddhist spiritual values infused into many, many school programs including the many practices that the school conducts every day.

In the class, as the students begin their lesson, they start off by what we called “mindfulness meditation practice” empowering your mind to receive the learning.

We have curriculum where students are immersed to learn about the spiritual values in the kind of personality, spiritual personalities that they study in their textbook so [Buddhism] It's very much there in our education system.

This is the time where we need to teach our children that, yes, this world, beautiful, wide world, it's outside. But the anchor is our heritage, our culture, our tradition.

Because otherwise the risk is that our children would grow up losing this connection to the roots and losing this anchor to the roots and therefore losing the identity of the individual and as a society as well.

Culture is an extremely important part of our country and, in fact, our constitution lays down

that the state must be responsible, actively responsible to promote and preserve culture.

Siok Sian Pek-Dorji: Frankly, I cannot stress enough the importance of telling our own stories, whether it's folklore, music, dance, or even just simple stories about Bhutan, that we have young people who tell stories, who make good films.

Our dance must evolve with a deep understanding of how our traditional dance started and then evolve because all these represent the essence of our own culture and our identity.

Lyonpo Norbu Wangchuk - Former Minister of Education: We are a tiny country, we are a tiny voice. But we would like to believe that we make the world beautiful.

Rinzin: My friends support and encourage me. They have been calling me "hero" all the time since they saw me in this film. They ask, every now and then, when the movie is going to be shown in the monastery. So I think my friends really appreciate me.

Lyonpo Norbu Wangchuk - Former Minister of Education: This is a beautiful country we have. We have a beautiful culture and we contribute to the diversity of the world and contribute in making this planet of ours a happier place to live. If we lose the culture of Bhutan, perhaps that much happiness in the world would be deprived and taken away.

Rinzin: I can teach my friends at the monastery how we make the film, like how we directed, how we used the camera, lighting, sound, the details.

Siok Sian Pek-Dorji: So contemporary culture modernity needs to be based on actually an understanding of our own essence. That's why it's so important for young storytellers like you, Rinzin, to create modern Bhutanese content and to inspire the new generation to remember their roots.

Rinzin: Now, I don't know how to talk about this film because it's about me but still, I feel so proud of myself that I made this film. I can't believe I did that.

Rinzin: [prayer in Bhutanese]

[00:25:04] CREDITS ROLL

Questions

How much did you know about Bhutan before hearing about it today?

Does this scene from Bhutan look somewhat familiar to you?

What is "globalization"?

What is "world culture"?

What is a "global citizen"?

What should we know about other people of the world? What should we expect? What should be receptive to? Attentive to? Mindful to? How can we enhance cooperation and decrease or mitigate conflict?

What do we need to know about what is going on in order to navigate now?

At 13:44, Rinzen says, "I would like to visit the city again. I wish to understand more about city life."



What would Riinzin

encounter for the first time visiting the city?

How do you suppose Rinzin would feel seeing all of that new, different, expensive difference of just the amount of stuff - resources, products - available?

15:20

Teaching the values, traditions, the culture.

What is the goal of education in Bhutan? (elicit understanding and perseverance of the culture,

traditions, etc)

Should we do the same in the US? What values, traditions, and culture should we teach you [young people at LS]?

Siok Sian Pek-Dorji: 20 minute mark

Importance of Storytelling for the preservation of culture

Section on culture

What does it mean to protect culture?

Pace of change versus pace of staying the same.

How are people in the world becoming more alike?

How are people in the world different? What are the basic ways? Common denominators? What do we need to look for? Know? To best be able to work with? Trade? Learn from? Befriend? People around the world.

How can we know our identities? Our distinctiveness? And remember that others are as distinctive as we are.

At the conclusion of the film, Siok Sian Pek-Dorji says, "So contemporary culture modernity needs to be based on actually an understanding of our own essence. That's why it's so important for young storytellers like you, Renzin, to create modern Bhutanese content and to inspire the new generation to remember their roots."

There are a lot of storytellers out there today. There are a lot of "influencers" out there. What are they seeking to influence? They are interested in influencing you, your behavior, your thinking, your culture.

What stories should young people create to create modern content and inspire the new generation to remember their roots?

I would suggest that dominant culture does much less to consciously preserve it than does a minority culture.

Rapid cultural change based fear. - How can we learn about other cultures in order to learn

about our own culture?

Is a similar fear of change happening in the US? Can that fear be sentimental? Can it be political?