

TAKE ACTION GUIDE:

BUDDHISM, BHUTAN AND ME



ABOUT THE FILM

Rinjin 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*, Rinjin reflects on this choice, and on his beloved country of Bhutan, which, like Rinjin himself, is caught between two worlds. Just as Rinjin 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. In his film, Rinjin travels from his monastery back home to Sakteng, and then to the city, documenting various aspects of tradition and pop culture, education, politics, religion and hip-hop, prayer and video games he sees around him – and learning how all these can exist together.

"I believe we should be careful how we progress and develop as a nation. It can only be achieved by committing ourselves to preserving our ideals, values and traditions. I want the world to understand Bhutan on a deeper context than just as a tourist destination." –Rinjin Jurmey

LEARN MORE

When thinking about the issues in the film, consider Articles 1, 17, 18 and 26 of 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.

REFLECT AND SHARE

1. Bhutan is a Buddhist country with a long, rich cultural history. Yet many of its citizens and members of its leadership are looking outward, to more modernized countries like the US, to envision a new future. 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. How might this concept 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? How is Bhutan trying to do so in the country's policies and educational systems? What tensions arise from this unique struggle?

2. Rinzin touches on the positive and negative influences that social media and the internet have on him and his friends. Do you relate to him?

Siok Sian Pek-Dorji talks about the effect of "nonstop entertainment" on youth in Bhutan, with "parents vying" for their children's attention. Do you see the positives and negatives to social media and the internet in your own life? In your academic successes and failures? In your relationships?

3. Is it possible to maintain personal enlightenment, confidence and happiness in traditional Bhutanese ways while also enjoying modern media?

TAKE ACTION

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. Bhutan has been called the happiest country in the world, and has created a Happiness Index to ensure that Bhutanese people are happy there. Research Bhutan's Happiness Index and create a report, poster, art installation, or another way to explain what it is and why it is important. What could you learn from it for your own life?
3. Initiate a mindful meditation practice program in your school. Go to 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 boy band, The Crowners, on social media and bring attention to their artistry. Visit facebook.com/people/The-Crowners-official/61571755005621.
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." Visit open.spotify.com/show/4uX9Hh8yE6RNYEY2BC7RcK.

ABOUT BYKIDS

BYkids produces real-world films for kids, by kids. Talented young storytellers from around the world are paired with seasoned filmmakers to create powerful documentaries about their lives. In partnership with public television and education innovators, we share the films and their educational resources to help make global issues feel personal, relevant and actionable for millions of students. Our work serves as a catalyst for change, igniting important conversations and inspiring a new generation of social activists. To support our work, visit bykids.org/donate.

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