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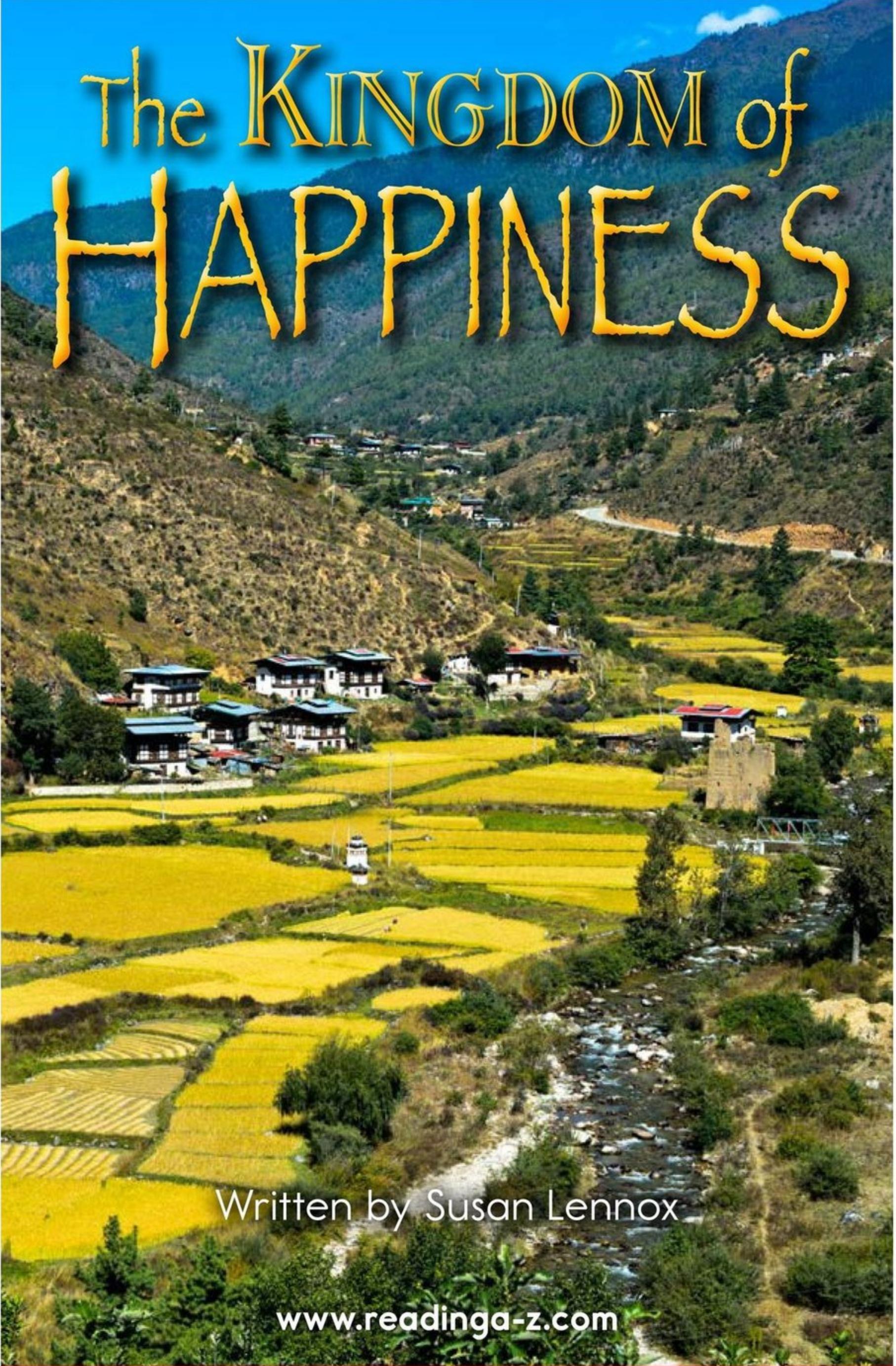
# The KINGDOM of HAPPINESS

Written by Susan Lennox

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# The KINGDOM of **HAPPINESS**



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## Focus Question

Is it important to measure happiness?

## Words to Know

analyzed  
balance  
Buddhist  
decline  
index

meditated  
survey  
tracking  
traditions

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### Correlation

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## Introduction

What is happiness? Happiness can mean many different things to different people. The people of Bhutan (boo-TAHN) think of happiness as being content or satisfied.

The leaders of Bhutan believe this, too. They think happiness is more important than money. That is why the Bhutanese government asks its citizens how happy they are every few years. The government uses this information to improve life for people in the country nicknamed “The Kingdom of Happiness.”

### Four Fast Facts About Bhutan

1. Bhutan is in the Himalaya Mountains.
2. The native language is Dzongkha (ZOHNG-kah). Many people also speak English.
3. For centuries, Bhutan defended its borders with bows and arrows. Today, archery is the national sport.
4. Bhutan has a king but also has leaders who are elected.





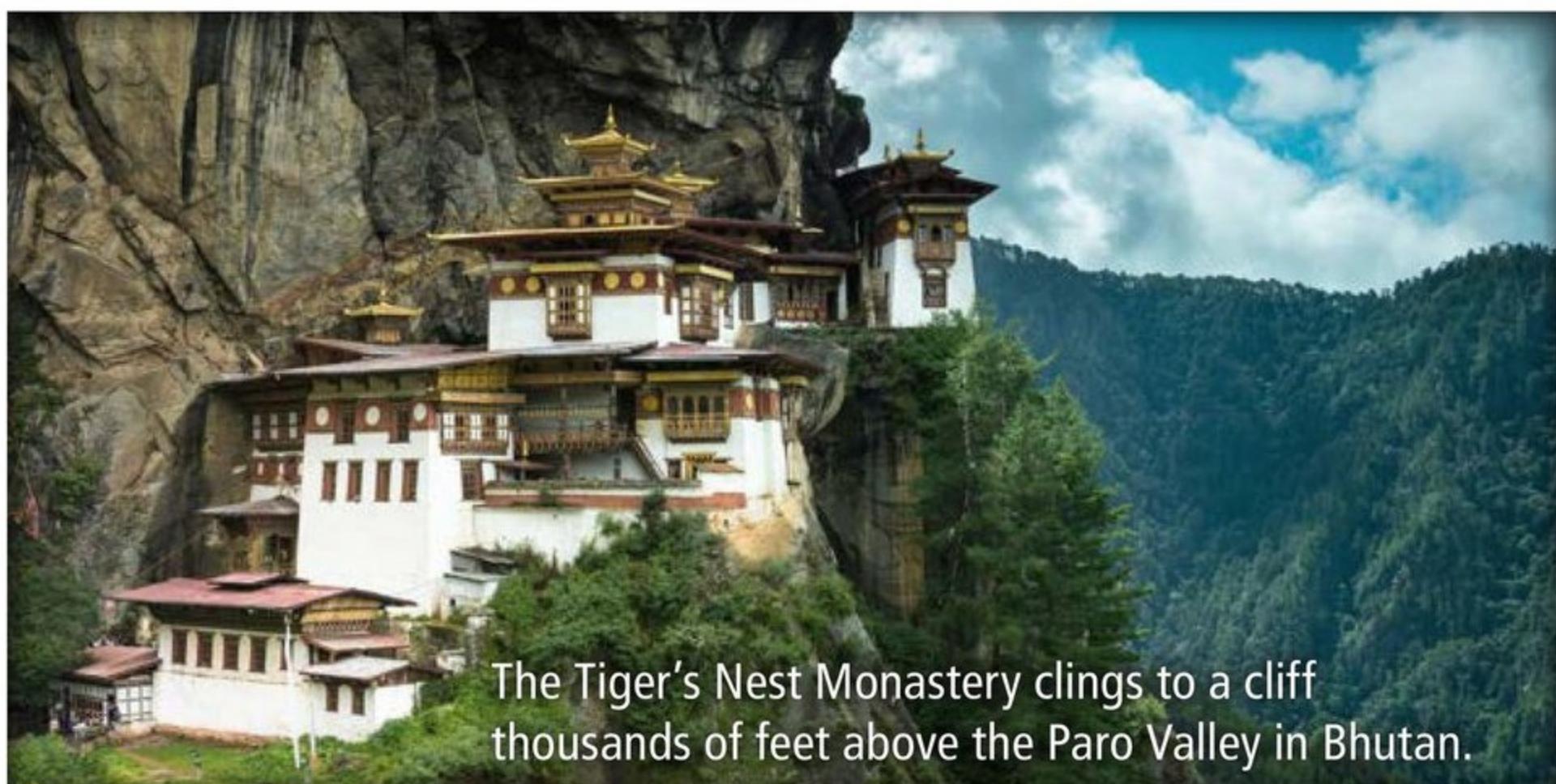
Bhutan's landscape ranges from low plains in the south to the towering Himalaya Mountains in the north.

## Growth and Happiness

Every few years, Bhutan gives citizens a **survey** about their happiness. Bhutan's first happiness survey took place in 2007. However, the idea of **tracking** happiness came about long before that.

In 1972, a new king was crowned in Bhutan. King Wangchuck was just sixteen years old. The young king loved his country and wanted to help it grow while remaining true to its values.

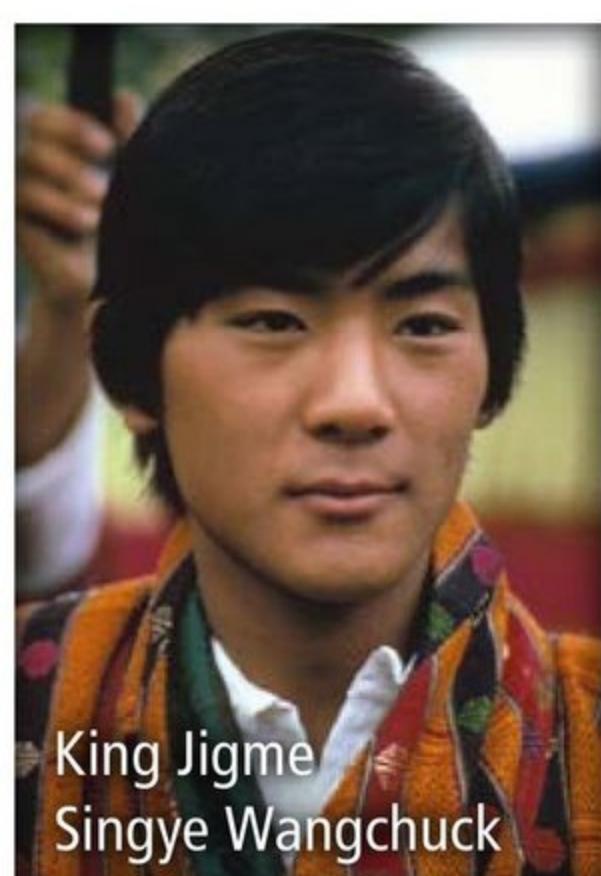
King Wangchuck knew that other countries tracked growth using GDP, or Gross Domestic Product. GDP measures the value of all the goods and services produced in a country.



However, the king did not believe that using GDP was right for his country. Buying and selling were not a driving force in Bhutan. The country has many farms and villages but few factories and cities.

Bhutan is also mostly a **Buddhist** nation. Buddhists believe that happiness is an important step in leading a good life. For them, being happy is not just about money. To achieve happiness, they believe a person must examine and improve many areas of his or her life.

King Wangchuck wanted all of Bhutan to focus on those things. He created a plan called Gross National Happiness (GNH) to guide Bhutan's growth.



King Jigme  
Singye Wangchuck

## Four Pillars of Happiness

Gross National Happiness, or GNH, was based on four ideas, or “pillars.” The first pillar was about how people were ruled. The second pillar looked at how people worked and played together. The third pillar was about preserving Bhutanese culture, while the final pillar looked at people’s role in the environment. These four areas affect everyone’s lives and sense of well-being. Bhutan’s leaders believed these four pillars must be in **balance** for their people to achieve happiness in life. The king and his ministers considered all four pillars when making important decisions.

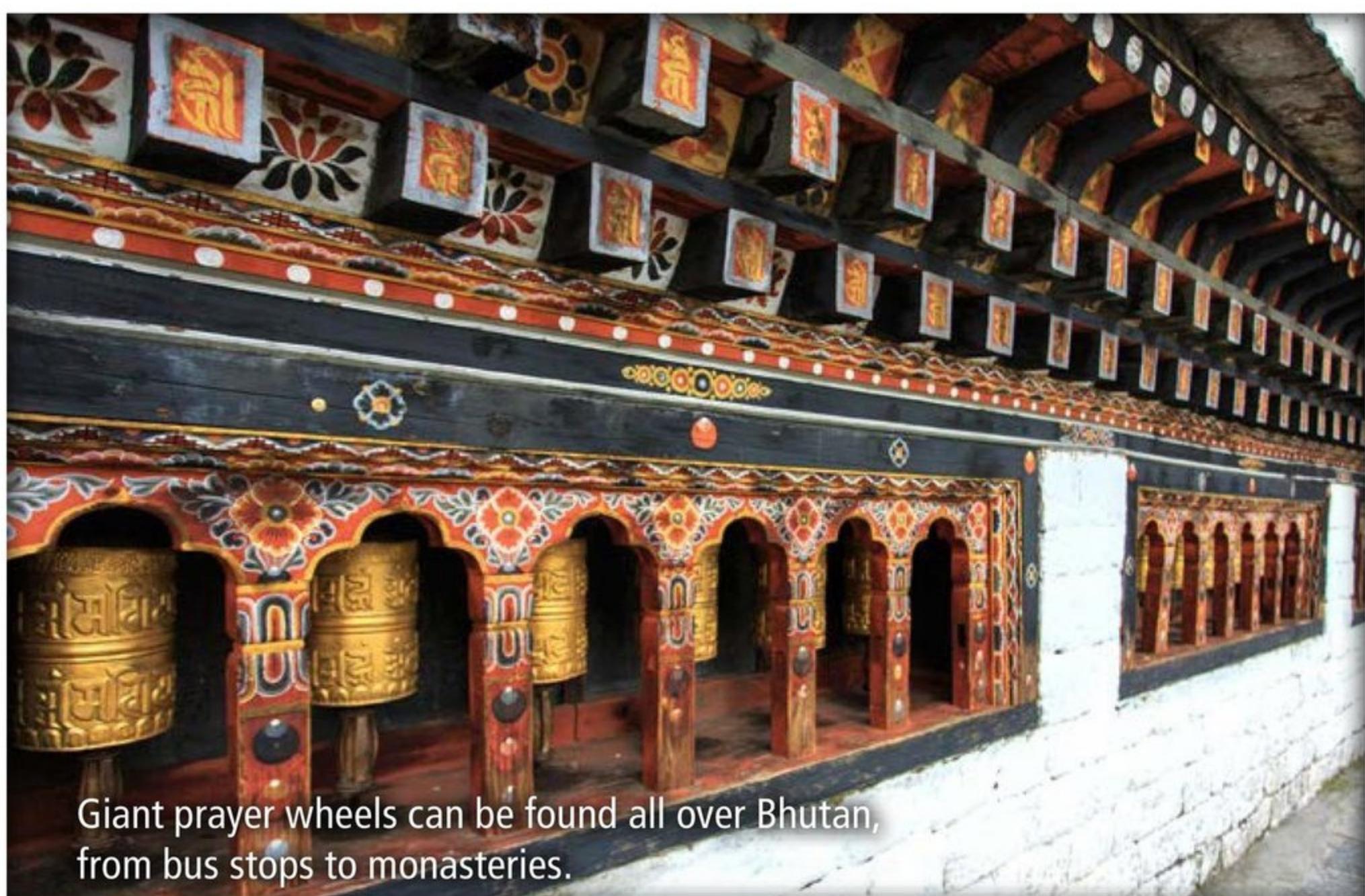
### Gross National Happiness

The measurement for Gross National Happiness is based on Bhutanese values:

1. Good governing
2. Wise handling of money and growth of society
3. Strong support for the Bhutanese way of life
4. Care of the natural world



At first, the four pillars were only simple suggestions for the Bhutanese people's happiness. Nothing was measured, no data captured. Signs posted around the country cheerfully reminded citizens to "help us develop our GNH country." Citizens tried their best to do so. People led simple lives and seemed content for the most part. Citizens dressed in traditional clothing. They sat quietly and **meditated** for a few moments each day. They cared for and enjoyed nature. Families spent time together. Bhutan continued as a quiet country, protected from the modern world. Then things began to change.



Giant prayer wheels can be found all over Bhutan, from bus stops to monasteries.



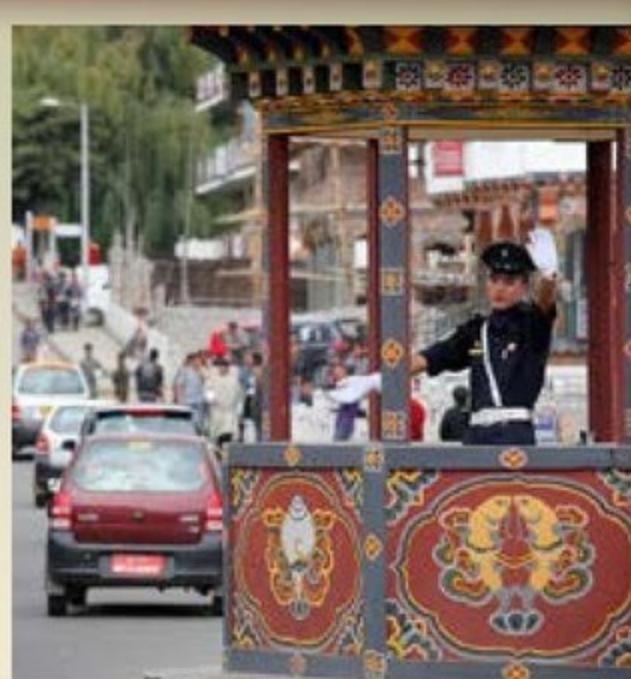
Morning meditation is part of the GNH school curriculum.

In 1999, Bhutan decided to let television and the Internet into the country for the first time. Bhutan's citizens began to learn more about the world beyond its borders. Outsiders were attracted to the country's untouched beauty and peaceful lifestyle. Many came to visit.

Bhutan now had one foot in the past and the other in the modern world. Bhutanese children watched television and played video games. Citizens began using cell phones. The country's leaders worried that the old **traditions** and values would be lost. If that happened, the original sense of what brought the Bhutanese people happiness might also be lost.

### Do You Know?

There are no stoplights in Bhutan. One was put up in the capital city of Thimphu, but it was removed. Citizens felt that a stoplight was just too modern. Instead, a traffic officer directs cars through the city's downtown.





A group of young monks gather around a cell phone at a monastery in Paro, Bhutan.

## Measuring Happiness

Bhutan's government decided it needed a way to keep track of and improve happiness. It wanted something more exact than just the four pillars. A measurement system would help the government keep track of happiness and deal with changes.

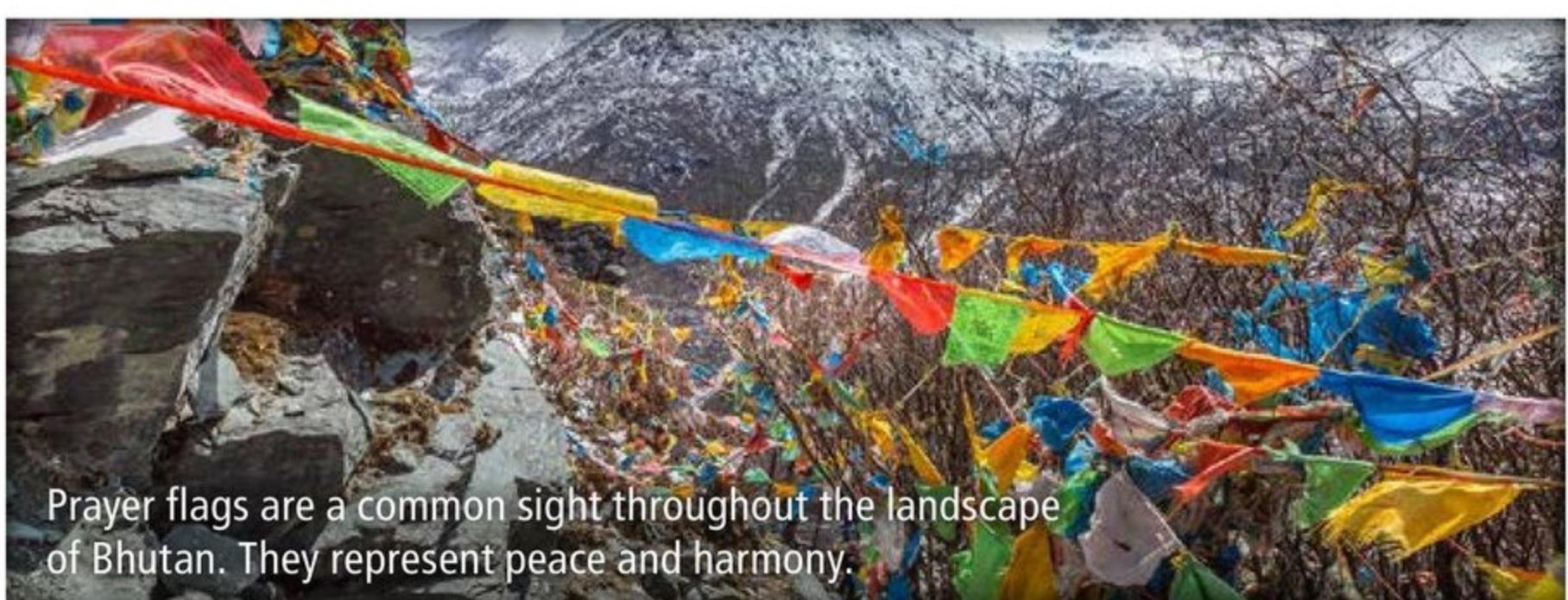
The Bhutanese Ministry of Planning went to work. First, they created nine areas, or "domains," that were based on the four pillars. The domains were then broken down into dozens of categories. When considered together, the domains and categories give a complete picture of happiness called the **Gross National Happiness (GNH) Index**.

Next, the government created questions about GNH areas. People were asked questions such as “How much do you enjoy life?” The questions were put together in a survey for the Bhutanese people. Each type of answer had a number. These numbers were added up to get a score for each person.



In 2007, the government tested the survey in some areas. In 2010, the survey was ready to be given across all twenty of Bhutan's districts. Survey teams traveled to mountain villages, valley farms, and cities. That year, more than seven thousand citizens out of over seven hundred thousand provided information about their lives. This information was **analyzed** using the GNH Index. The higher the number, the greater the happiness level. The survey found that women, farmers, and people who were uneducated or elderly were the least happy.

The government began to improve health care and daily life. Then another survey was done in 2015. Bhutan compared the results of the two surveys and learned that its citizens' overall happiness grew by 1.8 percent. More than 43 percent of the population was considered very happy.



Prayer flags are a common sight throughout the landscape of Bhutan. They represent peace and harmony.

## Is Everybody Happy?

One group of people in Bhutan who were not included in the survey were the Lhotshampa (loh-TSUHM-puh). They are Bhutanese citizens of Nepali descent who lived in the southern part of Bhutan. They came from Nepal in the nineteenth century to farm the rich land.

The Lhotshampa practice Hinduism, which is different from Buddhism. In the mid-1980s the Bhutanese government introduced a campaign requiring all citizens to wear Bhutanese clothing, speak Dzongkha, and practice Buddhism.

During the 1990s, tens of thousands of Lhotshampa fled Bhutan. Some went to Nepal and settled in camps. By 2015, close to eighty-five thousand of them came to the United States. Many hope to return to Bhutan someday.



There were certain areas, though, that showed a **decline**. People did less volunteer work. Fewer people thought tradition was important. The Bhutanese government plans to use the information from the survey to increase happiness. They may, for example, hold festivals that ask for communities to join in ancient traditions. The goal is to have a 100 percent deeply happy population someday.

## A World of Happy People

Other nations around the world have taken notice of Bhutan's GNH Index. Some have made their own to track their citizens' happiness. In 2007, Thailand created a national happiness index similar to Bhutan's. South Korea and Great Britain also developed their own scales similar to Bhutan's index. In 2009, a big company took a happiness survey of people in the United States.





Making money is secondary to personal happiness in the kingdom of Bhutan.

In 2011, the United Nations, an organization of countries around the world, did a study of world happiness. The United Nations printed its first World Happiness Report in 2012. The report ranked countries based on ideas like those used in Bhutan's GNH Index.

That same year, the United Nations officially declared March 20 the International Day of Happiness. Why March 20? On that day, the Sun is lined up with Earth's equator, and day and night are equally long. This day represents the Bhutanese king's belief that balance is the key to national happiness.

## Glossary

<b>analyzed</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	studied closely (p. 12)
<b>balance</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a state in which different parts are equal or in the right proportion to one another; harmony or equilibrium (p. 7)
<b>Buddhist</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	of or relating to Buddhism, a religion based on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama in ancient India (p. 6)
<b>decline</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a steady drop in amount, quality, value, or strength (p. 13)
<b>index</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a number that is used as a measure of something or to show change in the level of something (p. 10)
<b>meditated</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	focused and calmed the mind in silence or through chanting (p. 8)
<b>survey</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a way of collecting information about something by asking questions of a group of people (p. 5)
<b>tracking</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	watching the progress of something; following (p. 5)
<b>traditions</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	beliefs or practices that are passed down from year to year (p. 9)

# The Kingdom of Happiness

A Reading A-Z Level T Leveled Book  
Word Count: 1,055

## Connections

### Writing

Choose four things in your life that make you happy, such as your health or time at home or school. In a paragraph, give examples of how each thing makes you happy.

### Social Studies

Research Bhutan and create a poster that shows your findings. Provide facts about the country, including population size, language, religion, currency, and government leaders.

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