

LEVELED BOOK • Q

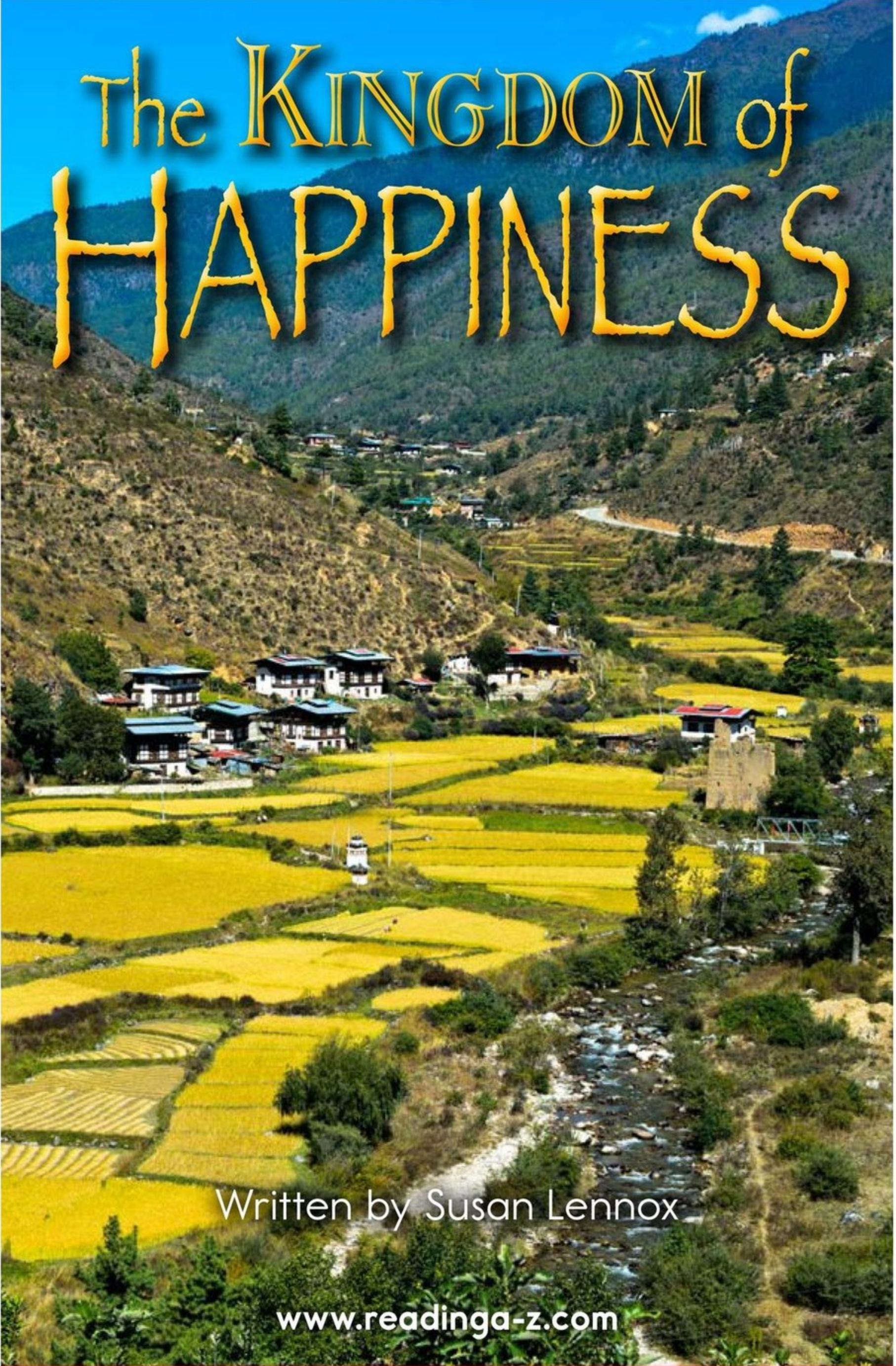
# The KINGDOM of HAPPINESS

Written by Susan Lennox

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MULTI  
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Q•T•W

# The KINGDOM of **HAPPINESS**



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## Focus Question

Is it important to measure happiness?

## Words to Know

analyzed  
balance  
borders  
Buddhists  
festivals

index  
survey  
tracking  
traditions

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## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	4
Growth and Happiness .....	5
Four Pillars of Happiness .....	7
Measuring Happiness .....	10
A World of Happy People .....	14
Glossary .....	16

## 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.

The government of Bhutan wants its citizens to be happy. It thinks happiness is more important than money. That is why the government of Bhutan asks people questions every few years to see how happy they are. This information is used to improve life for everyone in “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 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.



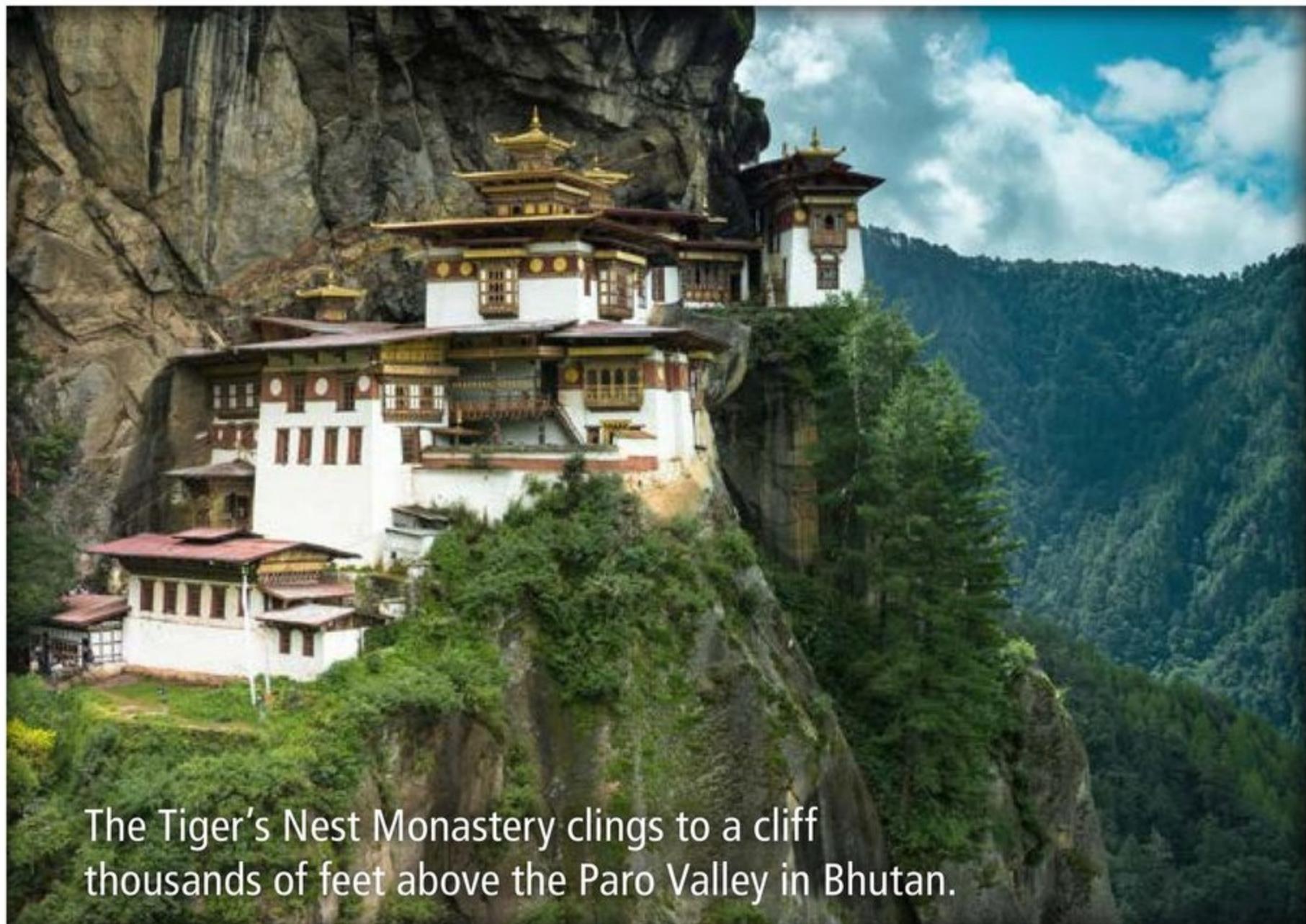


Bhutan's landscape ranges from low plains in the south to the towering Himalaya Mountains in the north.

## Growth and Happiness

Bhutan's first happiness interviews 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. He wanted it to grow and be successful.



King Wangchuck knew that other countries measure success by money alone. They add up the cost of goods they make and sell. The king did not believe that was right for Bhutan. Most of its citizens were **Buddhists**. They believe that happiness is an important step to leading a good life. Money was only a small part of that.

King Wangchuck wanted his country to be a happy place. Only then would it succeed. He came up with a plan for Bhutan called Gross National Happiness (GNH). It had four key ideas about happiness that would help Bhutan's growth.

## Four Pillars of Happiness

Bhutan's government believes that happiness is based on four ideas, or "pillars." These are government rule, social and work matters, culture and traditions, and nature and the environment. The king and his government considered all four pillars when creating new laws.



King Jigme Singye Wangchuck

## Gross National Happiness

The measurement for Gross National Happiness is based on things that Bhutanese people value:

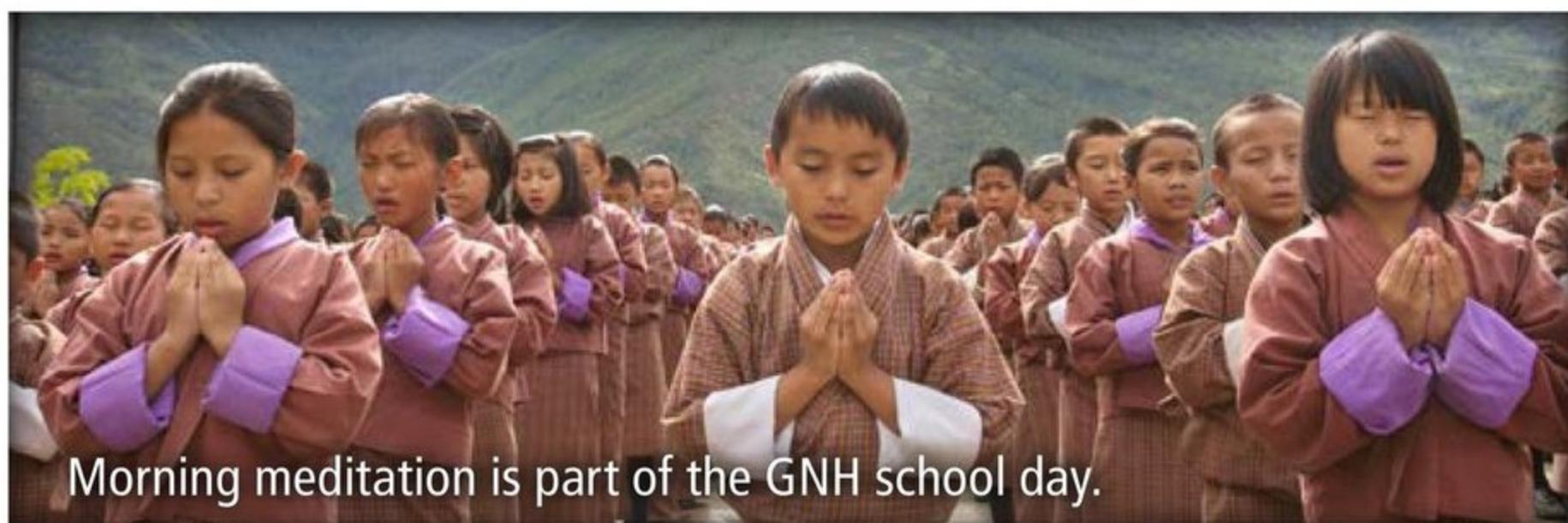
1. Good governing
2. Wise handling of money and growth of society
3. Strong support for the Bhutanese way of life
4. Care of the natural world



At first, the four pillars were only guides for people's happiness. There was no real survey. Bhutan was a quiet country protected from the modern world. Its people led simple lives and were mostly content. People dressed in Bhutanese clothing. They took time each day to sit quietly with their thoughts. They enjoyed nature. Families spent time together. Then things slowly began to change.



Giant prayer wheels can be found all over Bhutan.



In 1999, Bhutan let television and the Internet into the country for the first time. Bhutan's citizens began to learn more about the world outside their **borders**. The world also began to learn more about Bhutan. People were drawn to its natural beauty and peaceful lifestyle. Many came to visit.

The quiet kingdom now had one foot in the past and one in the modern world. Bhutanese children watched television and played video games. People began using cell phones. Bhutan's leaders became worried. They were afraid that traditions would be lost, and along with them the happiness of Bhutan's people.

### 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

The government decided it needed a way to keep track of happiness. It needed something more exact than just the four pillars.

Planners created nine areas, or “domains,” that were based on the four pillars. The domains were then broken down into categories. All the domains and categories made up the **Gross National Happiness (GNH) Index**. The GNH Index gave a more complete picture of happiness.

Next, the government wrote survey questions about GNH. The survey asked about people's lives. Each answer had a number. The numbers were added up to get a happiness score for each person.



In 2007, the government tested the survey. In 2010, the survey was ready to be given across all of Bhutan. Survey teams traveled to mountain villages, valley farms, and cities. More than seven thousand people out of over seven hundred thousand gave information about their lives. This information was **analyzed** using the GNH Index. The happiest people had the highest numbers. The survey found that women, farmers, uneducated people, and senior citizens were the least happy.

The government began to improve health care and daily life. Then another survey was done in 2015. Bhutan learned that its citizens' happiness grew by 1.8 percent!



Prayer flags are a common sight all over Bhutan. They stand for peace and balance.

## Is Everybody Happy?

One group of people in Bhutan who were not included in the survey were the Lhotshampa (loh-TSUHM-puh). They first came from Nepal as farmers in the nineteenth century. The Lhotshampa wore different clothes, had different ways of living, and were not Buddhists. In the 1980s the Bhutanese government required all citizens to wear Bhutanese clothing, speak Dzongka, and practice Buddhism.

During the 1990s, tens of thousands of Lhotshampa left Bhutan. Many hope to return someday.



A Lhotshampa woman holds her child while working on a road-building project in Thimphu, Bhutan.

There were some areas, though, where it dropped. People did less volunteer work. Not as many people thought traditions were important. Bhutan will work with its communities to improve in those areas. They may hold **festivals** that include national traditions. The goal is to someday have a population that is 100 percent happy.

## A World of Happy People

Other countries around the world heard about Bhutan's GNH Index. Some have made their own index to track their citizens' happiness. In 2007, Thailand created a national happiness index like Bhutan's. South Korea and Great Britain also developed tools based on Bhutan's GNH. In 2009, a big company took a happiness survey of people in the United States.





Money is not as important as personal happiness in Bhutan.

In 2011, the United Nations, an organization of countries around the world, did a study of world happiness. The United Nations put out its first World Happiness Report in 2012. The report listed countries based on their happiness score.

That same year, the United Nations named March 20 the International Day of Happiness. Why March 20? On that day, day and night are equally long. This day stands for the Bhutanese king's belief that **balance** is the key to national happiness.

## Glossary

<b>analyzed</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	examined 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. 15)
<b>borders</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	lines that divide one country or area from another (p. 9)
<b>Buddhists</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	followers of Buddhism, a religion based on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama in ancient India (p. 6)
<b>festivals</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	celebrations or organized series of related events (p. 13)
<b>index</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a number that is used as a measure of something or to show a change in the level of something (p. 10)
<b>survey</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a way of collecting information about something by asking questions of a group of people (p. 8)
<b>tracking</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	watching the progress of something; following (p. 5)
<b>traditions</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	beliefs or customs that are passed down from year to year and generation to generation (p. 7)

# The Kingdom of Happiness

A Reading A-Z Level Q Leveled Book  
Word Count: 820

## 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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