

HAPPINESS the Bhutanese way

12 short films focusing on aspects of Bhutan's GNH and Global Sustainable Development Goals for a better world by 2030

1. HAPPINESS THE BHUTANESE WAY – 1974-2018

Stories of Happiness and GNH narrated by Bhutanese



Duration: 30 min.

Since 1999 I have documented a large number of exciting statements about Bhutanese 'happiness' and GNH from bhutanese people from all walks of life. They come from three main groups; government and institutions, intellectuals, and people from urban and rural areas.

In 1999 Bhutan's Prime Minister Jigme Y. Thinley told me about Bhutan's development philosophy, Gross National Happiness (GNH). Since 1998, he has advocated the GNH philosophy immensely and shared it with the world.

Other statements on happiness are expressed by:

A wise old nun, a betel nut maker, a young man, a weeping dog lover, a middle aged man planting 10.000 trees, the Trade and Industry Minister, Editor in Chief of Bhutan's first newspaper,



Director of Centre for Bhutan Studies, Director of Bhutan's National Museum, female temple builder, an artist, who created an art studio, King of Bhutan, From 2017, a shopkeeper in Dewathang and Director of the NGO Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative(SJI), who is working on a GNH pilot project in the south east of Bhutan.

Suitable for the following disciplines:

English, Societal Studies, Geoscience (Climate Change and Sustainability), Religion, Philosophy, Media Studies and Cultural Appreciation.



2. FIRST DEMOCRATIC ELECTION OF A VILLAGE MAYOR



Varighed: 10 min.

One of the first mayoral elections in Bhutan in 2004 is lead enthusiastically by the regional administrator (Dasho Dzongda).

Throughout the day many villagers, men, women and children, gather around the voting site and the mayor's office.

In the same period Bhutan's King and the Chief Justice are holding meetings all over the country to discuss a new constitution. 3-8000 people

attend each meeting and are provided with food and drink.

At the village Doetey near Paro people discuss the election and the constitution, particularly the King's plan to retire at 65, which people certainly don't agree with. They want to keep their King, no matter what!

The mayoral candidates and others give us insights into many new perspectives in 2004. Many feel that democracy is too risky, as they have seen what problems it has caused in neighboring countries like Nepal and India.

Bhutan's constitution defines the Kingdom of Bhutan as a democratic constitutional monarchy belonging to the people of the Kingdom. It was enacted in July 2008 and it states that Buddhism is the spiritual heritage of Bhutan and the King is the head of State. Bhutan's first democratic prime minister (PM) was elected in 2008. In 2013 a new PM, Lyonpo Tshering Tobgay, was elected.

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



3a. GNH IN PUNAKHA HIGH SCHOOL



Duration: 14 min.

We are visiting Punakha High School. The students are having rice and lentil soup in the schoolyard, and everyone has learned to clean

their plate.

Principal Yesh Ghelley introduces his school to promote goodness and harmony and a 'Centre of Excellence' with emphasis on GNH, sustainability and environment.

In the 11th grade class we experience teacher Norbu Tshering using Shakespeare's 'The Merchant of Venice' from 1598. Teacher and students together try to find examples of GNH values and ethics in the old story and link them to daily experiences in Bhutan.

Afterwards the English teacher expresses his passions and the strength to teach GNH.

In the schoolyard, a number of students express how they understand GNH.

4 QUALITY EDUCATION



3b. YOUNG MONKS IN SCHOOL



Duration: 24 min.

We visit young monks from the 5th grade at the Dewathang monastery school. The monastery is lead by Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche, who apart from being a reincarnated Lama, is an internationally recognized film director with films like Travellers and Magicians (2003) and Vara: A Blessing (2013).

Khyentse Rinpoche is the spiritual initiator of the GNH pilot project SJI. Dasho Neten Zangmo, a director of SJI, 2017, is well known throughout Bhutan.

Dasho Neten opens the film by explaining SJI's

ideas about education. The monks should be inspired by GNH so that they learn about themselves, local nature, traditional wisdom, their own country and the world.

The young monks often walk and work in nature and senior teacher Dawa talks about the importance of being and working in nature.

First we see teacher Dawa teaching Walking Meditation to the monks on the lawn near the temple. Some of the monks talk about how this meditation makes them feel inside when they are walking very slowly moving their feet.

Later there is a holistic discussion before weeding in a garden. Teacher Dawa discuss with his students the true purpose of weeding and working in the garden.

In class the young monks share their own thoughts on GNH and being a part of nature. Teacher Dawa talks about how he imagines that his teaching in overall provides a holistic view through which the students will be inspired to learn new aspects of interdisciplinary knowledge and subjects.

Possible Disciplines: English, Social Studies.



4. ORGANIC FARMING IN BHUTAN



A generation ago 75% of the Bhutanese people were self-sufficient farmers working the 8% of the country's land that is arable, and the capital Thimphu had only 25.000 inhabitants.

In 2017 roughly 200.000 of the country's 790.000 inhabitants live in the capital. Many villages have seen one youngster after another move away for education and sometimes a whole family migrates.

Bhutan's government has decided that all the country's agriculture should be organic, and green production must be doubled so that people are able to buy local products instead of Indian products containing pesticides and chemical residue.

4a. ORGANIC FARMING AND ZERO WASTE



Duration: 23 min.

Dasho Neten, director of SJI, the GNH pilot project, starts the movie off. She talks about the GNH project, designed to help farmers switch to organic farming by educating a number of lead farmers who share their knowledge with 1000 other farmers.

We see farmers removing weeds in the paddy fields. Each farmer pushes a long iron rod with a rotating rake at the end of it. SJI farming advisor Karma Dema talks about the effort to get the farmers to farm all the available land, so that the country can become self-sufficient in organic grain and produce. Bhutan has 70% forest coverage and only 8% of the land is arable.

A drone flight passes the rice farmers and the paddy fields and fades to a small village and a temple where the locals are meeting to discuss an introduction of new plants.

The representatives from SJI are trying to make sure that both men and women understand what the future is likely to bring.

Finally we visit a group of women who are turning plastic waste into handbags.

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



4b. ORGANIC FARMER DAZA



Duration: 35 min.

Farmer Daza is a man who, unlike most farmers, is eager to try new things. He is happy to talk about the many things he has learned.

With support from SJI he has become an organic

farmer. Daza has been part of SJI since conception in 2011 and along with other local farmers he has stayed for training at Dr. Vandana Shiva's organic farm in Punjab, India.

He has learned to make compost, which he sells to other farmers, and has been able to buy a couple of extra cows with the money. He is the first farmer to make bio-gas from cow dung, before the dung is spread onto the fields.

Daza experiments with new types of fruit-bearing plants and hopes to sell the fruit.

He has learned from his trip to India that Indian farmers have been conned into using chemical fertilizers that make the soil hard as asphalt. Adding insult to injury the fertilizer is so expensive that they have been forced to take out bank loans that they cannot repay, leading many Indian farmers to take their own lives.

At the end of the movie we see Daza, as a lead farmer, training a group of women in their field. Daza's 9 years old son Jigme helps his father with planting and feeding the cows.

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



8 GOOD JOBS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



5a. COST OF CLIMATE CHANGE 2 – with glaciologist Karma Toeb



Duration: 38 min.

Bhutan Broadcasting service (BBS) in 2009 produced an award winning film about two glacier lakes that were in danger of flowing into one another, thus creating a flood and endangering the people in the valleys below, as well as their livestock and buildings.

The film crew undertakes a 10 day walking journey up in the very high mountains, where 350

Bhutanese volunteer workers and engineers are fighting with primitive tools to hold back the waters. The challenging project has since been taken over by the military.

Bhutan has a negative carbon emission, but the effects of CO₂ emissions from the rest of the world are clear visible here. The film features interviews with workers, engineers and glaciologist Karma Toeb.

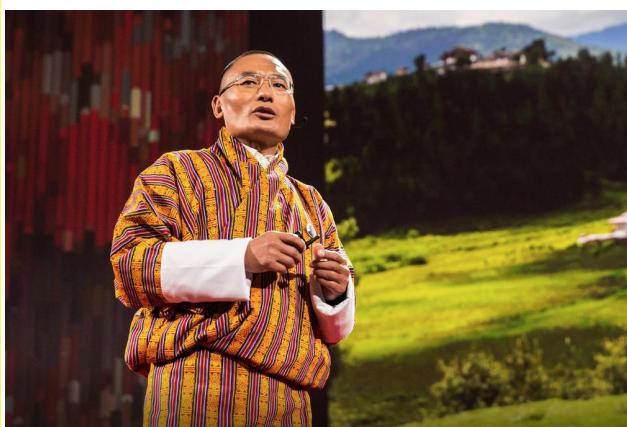
Bhutan has 2500 glacial lakes, which are monitored by satellites. Many of them are growing as the glaciers melt.

BBS and the film's director have allowed us to supplement the original footage with updated analysis from Karma Toeb speaking in 2017.

We expect to supplement the film at a later time with the most recent Japanese research, which shows a surprising drop in the rate of melt off from some glaciers.



5b. BHUTAN'S FORESTS ON WORLD RANGERS DAY



Duration: 24 min.

Bhutan's pristine forests, which cover 70% of its land area, are now protected in its constitution and are of great benefit to the rest of the world.

The forests have very rich flora and fauna, which have had mostly the same basic condi-

tions for thousands of years. Over the last 15-20 years local forest groups have been established to maintain the forests and to monitor their development.

We visited one of the 600 forest groups in Jamkhar in southern Tashiyangshi. In the same period, Bhutan's first World Rangers Day was celebrated in the capital where Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay speaking .

He speaks to rangers and members of forest groups about the importance of the forest and of their work. Later Bhutan's very first ranger speaks of his experiences in the early 60's, when Bhutan did not yet have any roads.



HYDROPOWER IN BHUTAN

Bhutan, which is the size of Denmark, has some of the world's highest peaks reaching 7,5 km. The rivers command awesome forces and the large amounts of water flow to the Indian lowlands. Bhutan has 24.000 MW of potential useable capacity of hydropower. In 2017 1600 MW were finalized and another 10.000 MW are under construction in cooperation with Indian companies, albeit with massive delays.

Tala Hydropower Plant was opened in 2007 with a design capacity of 1020 MW and an annual production of 4800 GWh, equivalent to the annual consumption of half a million Danish homes. Nearly all the electricity is sold cheaply to India, which has provided half the investment as a donation and the rest as a loan.

6. HYDROPOWER IN BHUTAN

Duration: 17 min.

The film depicts the construction of the 1020 MW Tala Hydropower Plant and the smaller but ingeniously built 64 MW Basochhu Plant.



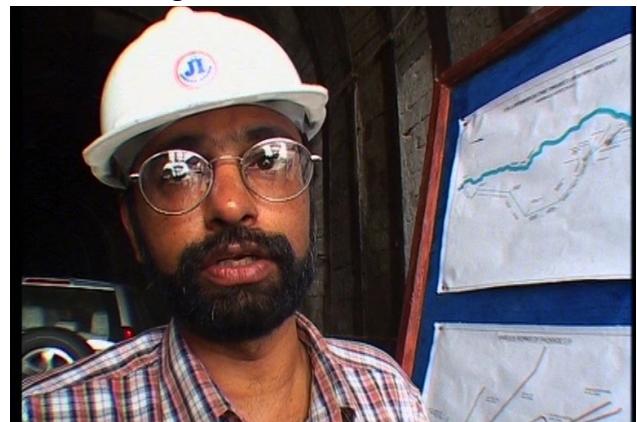
In 2003 Trade and Industry Minister Yeshey Zimba explains how Bhutan and India are co-operating on power plants. Tala Hydropower is constructed as a so-called 'run of the river' hydroelectric plant along a 23 km stretch of the Wangchu River deep inside the mountains. We were allowed for two days in 2003 to witness drilling and digging of tunnels, and we drove around in excavated temporary tunnels.

A water reservoir, 148 meters high and 18 meters wide, is being excavated. High above the future turbines, near the river, we stand at the top of a kilometer long and four meter wide tube. Their walls will be covered in iron plating which is being assembled at a temporary factory nearby.

Three years later seven tubes will constantly be filled with powerful water to drive the 7 tur-

bines before the water flows back into the river.

The small power plant, Basochhu, gets its water from a river, which leads into an artificial lake near the Upper Stage Plant, which has two turbines with a capacity of 24 MW. The same water is lead through a 2.6 km headrace tunnel down



to the Lower Stage Plant's turbines, which have a capacity of 40 MW.

Mr. Pema Wangdu, the plant's Chief Engineer, explains about the Basochhu, which was built with technical and financial assistance from Austria and an efficient cooperation between Bhutan and Austrian engineers. It runs flawlessly, supplying electricity exclusively to Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan. The Austrian Foreign Minister inaugurated the plant in 2005.

Mr. Chhewang Rinjin, MD of Druk Green Power Corp. Ltd., talks about perspectives, plans for the future and Bhutan's experiences in the Asian region.



7a. YOUTH VOLUNTEERS SUPPORT YOUNG AND OLD - AND ANIMALS



Duration: 20 min.

For several years Jigme Yosel and a group of youths from the Jangsa Initiative collect edible garbage from hotels and the local vegetable market every Sunday after closing.

Sick and weakened street dogs are brought to a 'dog center' outside the city where they are fed and cared for. Pigs and cows, rescued from slaughtering , have been purchased by some one and brought to the center for care and

safety. In general Buddhists don't kill animals but the demand for meat is increasing.

Jangsa Initiative also helps vulnerable youths in the capital by teaching them a craft or trade of interest. We see them constructing a small juice bar.

For more than 15 years young artists have gathered children and young people at the Voluntary Artists' Studio of Thimphu (VAST) for free art sessions and social interaction.

The youths have also discovered that many elderly people in the capital do not have enough to eat.

Every Sunday they prepare rice porridge for the elderly people gathered around National Memorial Chorten and the prayer mills. The youths have great respect for the elderly people for giving them a good country and protecting the environment.



7b. DO WE HAVE ENOUGH CUPS



Varighed: 17 min.

Jigme Yosel and other young volunteers prepare rice porridge in an open air kitchen near the National Memorial Chorten. They wash hundreds of bamboo cups, which they purchased when they decided to start preparing porridge for some of the elderly citizens.

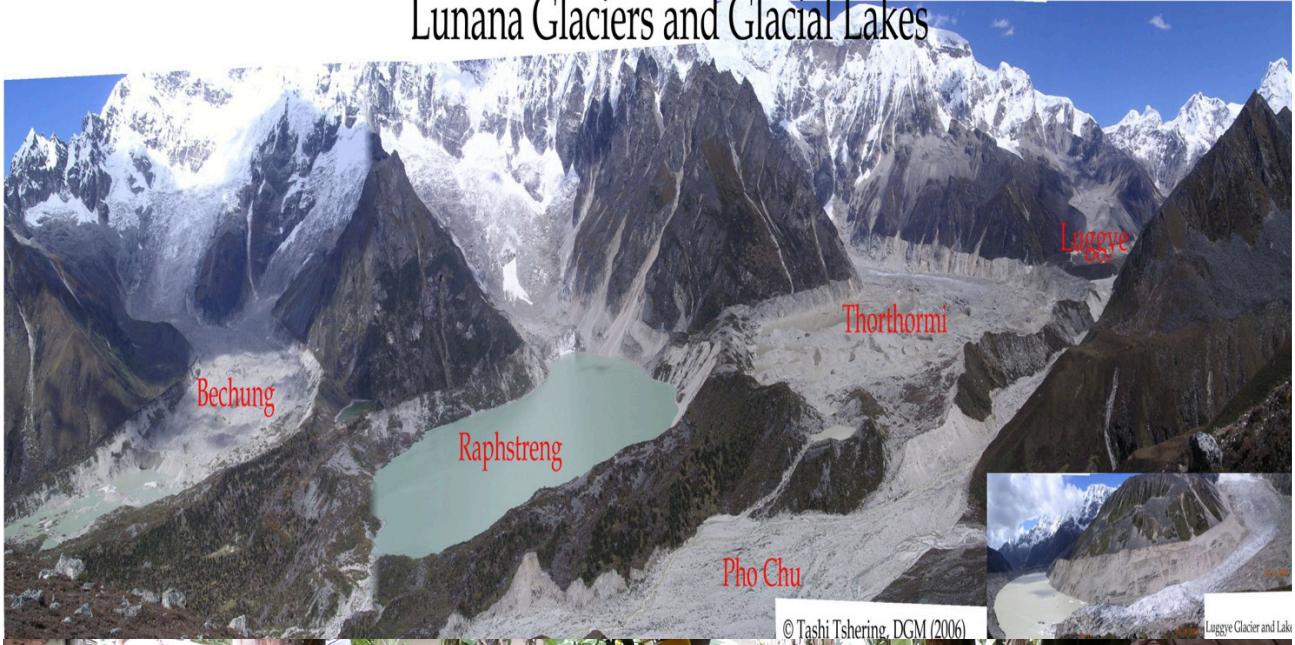
Many elderly people have moved to the capital to be closer to their children or for treatment

at the hospital. Every day they come to the Memorial Chorten to prepare for their next life by chanting prayers while walking around and making prostrations. A nutritious rice porridge is served by young girls and boys to the elderly people while they laugh and enjoy their time together. It is customary to offer to the Buddha, some put the cup on the head and share a little porridge with the spirits of nature.

The elderly people are used to cook over an open flame at the village, and many find it hard to cook on modern stoves. Because of this they often go hungry while their children are at work. Some have no one to cook for them at all, and need the help even more.



Lunana Glaciers and Glacial Lakes



© Tashi Tshering, DGM (2006)

Luggye Glacier and Lake

