

Bhutan GNH

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Newsworthy: Regulating Happiness

Gross National Happiness

Bhutan is a country of 700,000 people that sits high in the Himalayan Mountains between the two growing world powers of India and China. It has only one airport, and two commercial airplanes. The capital city has no traffic lights and only one traffic officer is on duty.

Traditionally, the country was ruled by a king. In 2006 King Jigme Singye Wangchuck stepped down to pave the way for the country to have its first democratic elections.

Bhutan's new constitution establishes that the worth of the country will not be measured by gross national product as most other countries are, but rather by the happiness of its citizens. Government programs such as agriculture, transportation, and even foreign trade are to be judged not by economic criteria, but by the happiness they generate in the citizens of Bhutan. The king himself came up with the idea of gross national happiness (GNH) in the 1970s.

Gross national product is easy to measure. It is the sum of all goods and services produced in one country in one year. How does Bhutan measure gross national happiness? The government has established four areas of a happy society: the economy, culture, the environment, and fair government. It divides each of these areas into nine groupings: psychological welfare, ecology, health, education, culture, standard of living, time use, community strength, and good

governance. Each of these is given a weighted GNH index. For example, psychological welfare is measured by time spent meditating and praying, and emotions such as generosity, calmness, and compassion.

Bhutan believes that GNH will help its citizens preserve the country's identity and culture, where cigarettes are banned, television arrived in the 2000s, and traditional dress and architecture are mandated by strict laws. The GNH will ensure that the country can manage the changes brought on by globalization by remaining distinct and different from the rest of the world.

Questions

1. Describe Bhutan.
2. What is GNH?
3. How is GNH measured?
4. Explain whether you think Bhutan will be able to keep its distinctive culture.
5. Do you think Canada should measure its success by GNH? Why or why not?