

Timeline

1907 - Ugyen Wangchuck becomes first hereditary ruler.

1949 - Two years after India gains independence, Bhutan signs the "Treaty of Perpetual Peace and Friendship with India" in which India pledges not to interfere in the internal affairs of Bhutan, but retains influence in foreign relations.

1952 - Jigme Dorji Wangchuck becomes king. A 130-member National Assembly is established, however, the king retains veto power and the ability to issue royal decrees.

1958 - Slavery is abolished. Bhutanese originally from Nepal are granted citizenship by new Nationality Laws if they can prove their presence in Bhutan for 10 years prior.

1959 - Several thousand refugees are granted asylum after the Chinese annexation of Tibet. Bhutan bans further immigration of Nepalese.

1964 - Disputing political factions leads to violence and the assassination of the prime minister and the attempted assignation of the monarch.

1971 - Bhutan becomes a member of the UN.

1972 - Jigme Singye Wangchuck becomes king and continues "cautious modernization" after his father dies.

1974 - Foreign tourists are first allowed into Bhutan.

1977 - The Bhutan Citizenship Act is enacted, requiring applicants to have lived in the country for 20 years, to have a working knowledge of the written and spoken language, and to practice the customs and traditions of the Bhutanese.

Women married to foreigners are citizens, but the husbands and children are not. Men married to foreigners and their children are considered citizens, but the wives are not.

1980 - The National Council for Social and Cultural Promotion is established in order to integrate Bhutan. However, in the same year, the Marriage Act is enacted discouraging inter-marriage between traditional and Nepali Bhutanese.

1985 - The Bhutan Citizenship Act of 1985 supersedes previous citizenship acts and requires both parents to be citizens, allows permanent residents domiciled prior to December 31, 1958 to retain citizenship, affords naturalization to those who have resided in Bhutan for 15 years for government employees or 20 years for non-government employees, denies citizenship to those who acquired citizenship in another country, through fraud or false statements, or if the person speaks or acts in a manner disloyal to the king, country or people of Bhutan. If citizenship is denied, the person has one year to dispose of all immovable property or have it confiscated.

1988 - Many ethnic Nepalese are branded illegal after a national census. Measures are taken to strengthen Tibetan-based Bhutanese culture at the expense of the minority ethnic Nepali-based culture.

1989 - Even though Nepali, Dzongkha and English had been the official languages of Bhutan, the Nepali language is no longer used in schools.

1990 - Violent ethnic conflict and anti-government protests, calling for respect for Nepali rights, erupt in Southern Bhutan. Thousands of Nepalis are evicted or flee to Nepal. Those who flee are called traitors. Their family members lose citizenship and are charged with crimes against the nation. Bhutan People's Party is formed and begins a campaign of violence.

1992 - A life sentence is given to the leader of the Bhutan People's Party. Bhutan National Democratic Party is formed.

1994 - The Druk National Congress (DNC), which calls for democracy as well as protections and respect for human rights, is established in exile in Nepal.

1996 - Nepal demands that Bhutan allow for the return of approximately 80,000 refugees.

1998 - King Wangchuck presents, "Four Pillars of Happiness"; sustainable economic development, environmental

conservation, promotion of national culture and good governance. The National Assembly is given the ability to elect and replace a majority of the cabinet and to replace the king with the crown prince. The DNC claims an imprisoned activist died from torture and malnutrition.

1999 - 120 political prisoners received excessive prison sentences and were tortured and mistreated in detention. The government begins to allow restricted access to TV and Internet services.

2001 - Approximately 100,000 people living in refugee camps in Nepal claim they were forced out of Bhutan in the 80s and 90s due to ethnic and political repression. Bhutanese and Nepalese authorities discuss repatriation of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal.

2002 - India asserts that two rebel groups remain in Bhutan despite Bhutan's deadline for their removal.

2003 - Bhutanese soldiers attempt to drive Indian rebels from their bases in south Bhutan. King Wangchuck meets with India's national security advisor to discuss the security concerns of both nations.

2005 - Proposed constitution with a parliamentary democracy is unveiled. Wangchuck states that he will relinquish his throne to the crown prince in 2008 after parliamentary elections.

2006 - Bhutanese refugees in Nepal hold demonstrations for third-country resettlement. Preparations are made for the 2008 elections. Training of poll workers begins. King Wangchuck relinquishes power to crown prince, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck.

2007 - Political parties are legalized. Bhutan and India sign an agreement giving Bhutan greater control over Bhutanese foreign and defense policies. A mock election introduces voters to the electoral process. Prime Minister Khandu Wangchuck resigns to run in the 2008 elections.

2008 - Ethnic Nepalis are blamed for a series of bomb attacks. Bhutan Harmony Party wins 44 of 47 seats in the first election. One other party wins the remaining 3 seats. Both parties are pro-monarchy. Constitution is ratified July 18, 2008. India claims Assamese separatists are linked to the Bhutan dissident DNC.

2011 - Local elections are held. About 58,000 refugees have been resettled in third countries, mostly to the US. King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck marries Jetsun Pema, a 21 year old student.

2012 - Plans are made to consolidate refugee camps in Nepal to two camps.

2013 - The opposition People's Democratic Party wins 32 seats while the incumbent Druk Phuensum Tshogpa party wins 15 in parliamentary elections. Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay admits that Bhutan's Gross National Happiness concept distracts from corruption, poverty, and increasing debt. After six years of resettlement, 100,000 ethnic Nepali refugees from

Bhutan have been resettled among eight different countries.

2015 - US Secretary of State John Kerry meets with Prime Minister Tobgay.



Torture Methods

SEVERE BEATINGS with fists, rifle butts, canes, sticks, branches, batons, chains, and belts to the head, back, arms and soles of the feet have been done to intimidate and extract information from detainees. Prison guards reportedly change hourly, and with the change come new beatings. Torture and beatings during interrogations have resulted in hospitalization and death.

FORCED FIGHTING between prisoners has occurred for the amusement of the guards.

CHEPUWA occurs when torturers stand on or press on a prisoner's legs that have been tied with bamboo.

SEXUAL HUMILIATION including anal insertion with canes, being stripped naked and forced to walk in the prison yard in front of guards and their wives with weights tied to the genitals, being stripped naked, tied, and beaten in public in the police courtyard in front of relatives and the public has been used to convince the public not to support "anti-national" groups, protests, and activities.

RAPE of women and girls by the Royal Bhutanese Army, including repeated gang rape for a month at a time, has been reported in large numbers.

STRESS POSITIONS include being tied upside down and left hanging, being bent down on fingers and toes and beaten, and sitting cross legged with hands and feet tied together.

DENIAL OF ACCESS to lawyers and relatives and arrests without formal charges leave detainees wondering if they will ever be released or see their families again.

THREATS have been made by interrogators against detainees' family and friends if "anti-national" activities do not end. This includes giving false information to detainees about the death, murder, or rape of a family member or claiming that a hole has already been dug to bury the detainee in.

FORCED MARCHING has occurred when peaceful protesters have been arrested, tied, or chained in groups, and forced to march to prison.

IRRITANT TORTURE is the application of irritants like chili powder to body parts, open cuts, or sores.

DENIAL of nutrition, sleep, health services including the inability to bathe, sleep, eat, or drink water has resulted in disease and death. Prisoners report being offered urine in place of water and given rice mixed with glass or sand.

SOCIAL ISOLATION AND SENSORY DEPRIVATION include being blindfolded, hooded, and kept in dark rooms in isolation from other prisoners and guards.

HAIR TORTURE involves being dragged by the hair or having hair pulled out or burned.

FORCED EXPOSURE to extreme cold has occurred.

Current Situation

Population: 741,919 (July 2015 est.)

Ethnic Groups: Ngalop (also known as Bhote) 50%, ethnic Nepalese (includes Lhotsampas - one of many Nepalese ethnic groups) 35%, indigenous or migrant tribes 15%

Religion: Lamaistic Buddhist 75.3%, Indian- and Nepalese-influenced Hinduism 22.1%, other 2.6%

Language: Sharchhopka 28%, Dzongkha (official) 24%, Lhotshamkha 22%, other (includes foreign languages) 26%

THE BHUTANESE GOVERNMENT began to transition from a monarchy to an electoral democracy in 2008. The constitution provides for a parliament consisting of a National Congress of 25 seats, of which 20 members are elected by each of the 20 districts and the remaining five are nominated by the king, and a National Assembly of 47 seats, which are elected by popular vote. The king nominates and the National Assembly approves the cabinet. While the king can return legislation with objections or amendments, once it has been reconsidered and resubmitted, it must be signed into law.

CULTURAL DOMINANCE is problematic in Bhutan. Of the Ngalops, Sharchops, and Lhotshampas; the Ngalops are the majority and dominant group in society and the government. Their culture, norms, and Buddhist religion are considered to be the standard that all citizens should adhere to. They are believed to have migrated from Tibet in the 8th and 9th centuries. The Sharchops are thought to be descendants of the earliest and largest group to live in Bhutan. Together with the Ngalops and other indigenous groups they are known as the Drukpas and account for 65% of the total population. The Lhotshampas are descendants of Nepal and account for 35% of the population. They are mostly farmers and speak many different Nepali dialects and mostly practice Hinduism. Bhutanese refugees traditionally adhere to a complex Caste System, similar to that of Nepal.

REFUGEE MIGRATION began near the end of the 19th century, when many Nepalese began to migrate to Southern Bhutan, where they had been allowed to maintain their language and customs. However, in the mid-1980's the Bhutanese government began passing laws stripping away the citizenship rights of many Nepali-speaking Bhutanese or Lhotshampas. After government attacks on protests calling for democracy and respect for human rights, many Lhotshampas left Bhutan fearing persecution and torture from the Bhutanese government security services. Since 1990, over 100,000 Nepali-speaking Bhutanese refugees have entered Nepal. In 2007, all of the Bhutanese refugees in Nepal qualified to be resettled in a third country. By 2013, resettlement of the Bhutanese refugees reached a major milestone with 100,000 refugees referred for resettlement among eight different countries—with 80,000 already living in their new country of resettlement. The deadline to apply for resettlement closed on June 30, 2014.

SUICIDE among the Bhutanese continues to be a serious problem. The suicide rate among Bhutanese Americans is almost double the U.S. national average and is higher than that of any refugee population in the U.S. In refugee camps in Nepal, there were 67 completed and 64 attempted suicides from 2004-2010; however, from 2011-2013, there were 28 completed and 94 attempted suicides. According to the Centers for Disease Control, there were 16 completed suicides among the Bhutanese resettled in the U.S. from 2009-2012; and 14 in 2013.