



BHUTAN ECHOES

DRUKYUL'S LITERATURE FESTIVAL

Festival Report

22-25 APRIL 2022

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THE FIRST DRUKYUL'S LITERATURE FESTIVAL

'Stories and ideas for a changing world'

Producer's Note

In this unprecedented year, Bhutan Echoes direction to take the Drukyl Literature Festival online under the gracious guidance of our Royal Patron, Her Majesty the Queen Mother Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck marks a turning point for us, where we had to experiment with new formats and innovate closely with our community of readers, writers, thinkers, and artists.

Although we were unable to gather in person, we were witness to online conversations that bridged the digital divide and brought together online festival audiences in and outside of Bhutan. While online events cannot recreate the thought-provoking exchange of speakers and audience, or the cultural exchange and creativity that a gathering of people in a physical space can bring, we believe we were able to create something special this year. As we watched and listened to the interaction of speakers, sessions and audiences online during the festival, we were inspired by the sense of community and overwhelming support we received. This sense of community was an uplifting gift during this challenging year, which we are very grateful for.

What truly made this year's festival extra special is that in the planning of this festival - we rallied our community of readers, writers, and the youth to participate in designing the sessions and collectively generated ideas for it, to make it both inclusive and diverse at the local and international level. This year, engaging young people is an essential part of our mission and we will continue to collaborate and serve our young people and community through our year-long programs.

We thought of the last two years, how everything around us changed, much of the things we thought of as normal had changed and we had to defer the festival two times. As we transitioned from Mountain Echoes to Bhutan Echoes and hosted our very first Drukyl's Literature Festival, we decided on the theme: stories and ideas for a changing world - as we want to remember powerful stories that matter to us.

This year's festival sessions celebrated and discussed progressive changes in Bhutan and around the world. These changes include sociocultural, environmental, technological, economic and human connection discussions. We hosted and showcased new and brilliant voices from Bhutan and around the world for four inspiring and thought-provoking days.

Since last October, Bhutan Echoes has been able to forge ahead, and fulfill our mission to connect people to exceptional books, ideas, and dialogue through our year-round programming, in the form of digital and in-person programs and projects. We started with the Drukyl: A Digital Salon, a series of intimate conversations with special guests to discuss literature, stories, arts and ideas, we also celebrated book launches of incredible Bhutanese authors and organized a lively open mic night.

In this report you will find how we delivered the festival and fulfilled our festival mission through a diverse array of sessions, authors, artists and speakers we admire, their invigorating stories and ideas. You will also find the names of the many people and organizations who contributed to make the work possible.

FESTIVAL REPORT

We humbly offer our sincere gratitude to Her Majesty the Queen Mother, Gyalyum Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck for graciously guiding and inspiring us under your vision, and being the true driving force behind Drukyl's Literature Festival.

On behalf of the Bhutan Echoes family, I want to thank our incredibly generous funders and partners - India Bhutan Foundation, Tourism Council of Bhutan and Tarayana Foundation for continuing to support us, your role in helping us achieve our goals and making this festival possible.

Your support has allowed us to continue our work and ensures that Bhutan Echoes will be here throughout the year in the form of our monthly programs, leading to our next year's festival and beyond. Moving forward, we will bring all that we have learned, lost, and gained to a brighter year ahead, in collaboration and partnership with you and with your support. We will remain committed to continue building an organization to meet the moment now, and in the future, bringing and working with the best, young and established writers and artists from Bhutan, India and the world through Bhutan Echoes year-long programs. And to celebrate and strengthen our special continued friendship with India through exchange of shared culture, art and literature.

With gratitude,



Kitso Pelmo Wangdi
Producer

Festival Overview

Bhutan Echoes: Drukylul's Literature Festival 2022, in its first launch since transitioning from Mountain Echoes saw a diverse mix of well-known literary figures from Bhutan, India and the world who talked about various topical issues such as environment and climate change, the impact of Covid-19, entrepreneurship and digital technology, gender equity, LGBTQI+ and youth empowerment among others. The festival brought together authors, artists and literary figures from different generations to discuss about storytelling, and how literature, reading and writing has evolved over many years in Bhutan.

Held live through Facebook, the four-day festival featured storytellers and artists from various disciplines and genres including history, religion, film, music, poetry and dance among others.

In her opening address, Her Majesty Gyalyum Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuk said this year's literary festival has a special place for young people and that young people should be encouraged to come forward to share their work, experiences, dreams and aspirations.

A class 9 student Pema Yangsel Dorji, who authored 'Worlds of Wonder' talked about her fascination with fantasy fiction while sixteen-year-old Yeshey Tsheyang Zam who writes children's stories shared about the importance of reading as an indispensable part of developing good writing skill. This year's Bhutan Echoes provided a unique platform for young authors and artists.

At the same time, the festival also featured serious and important discussions on topical issues such as climate change, technology and entrepreneurship. But rather than discussing only the negative impacts of climate change, a special session by Sonam Wangchuck, an Indian engineer, innovator and education reformist shared several innovative solutions for the problems created by climate change.

Due to the diversity of topics and discussion, the focus on local artists and relevance to current situations, Bhutan Echoes, even though held virtually, garnered huge number of viewers online.

The festival also provided a platform to the LGBTQI+ community to discuss about the issues they face in our society including social stigma and discrimination. They explored the need to share more impactful and positive stories to encourage people to express their gender identity and sexual orientation.

Spiritual thinkers, scholars, historians and experts in Buddhist traditions such as Dr Karma Phuntsho, Dr Françoise Pomaret, Venerable Karma Lekshe Tsomo, Neyphug Trulku Ngawang Sherdrup, Dechen Rabgyel and Dharmacharya Shantum Seth presented a huge cache of knowledge, wisdom and insights with their discussions on spiritualism, the life and deeds of Guru Padmasambhava, the value of oral history to document the lives of ordinary people, how to live mindfully during lockdowns and how to transform crises in life into opportunities.

Some of the sessions introduced viewers into the process of writing and editing to transform our thoughts into well-polished reading materials for others. The sessions that focused on film making, music and poetry also had many young speakers and artists sharing their stories.

In the first session of the first day of the festival Ashwin Sanghi stated, “The shortest distance between two people is a story.” Stories have huge potential to bring about transformation. The festival sought to appreciate this potential and power of stories to bring about progressive changes in our societies.

Our Royal Patron



Her Majesty the Royal Queen Mother Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck

In 2010, Her Majesty the Queen Mother Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck, co-founded Bhutan’s first literature festival, called Mountain Echoes, as an Indo-Bhutan initiative. Over the last decade, the festival has welcomed international literary figures during our annual gatherings in August each year.

A decade later, in 2020 under the guidance of Her Majesty, the festival began a new chapter as we transitioned from Mountain Echoes to Bhutan Echoes. We are ever grateful to Her Majesty the Gyalyum for inspiring and empowering us to continue to bring this celebration of the literature and arts through the Drukyl’s Literature Festival.

Our Advisors



Kesang Choden T



Chablop Passu



Chador Wangmo

Our Directors



Sonam Wangmo
Dukpa-Jahlani



Kelly Dorji



Dolma Choden
Roder



Tshering Tashi

Our Producer



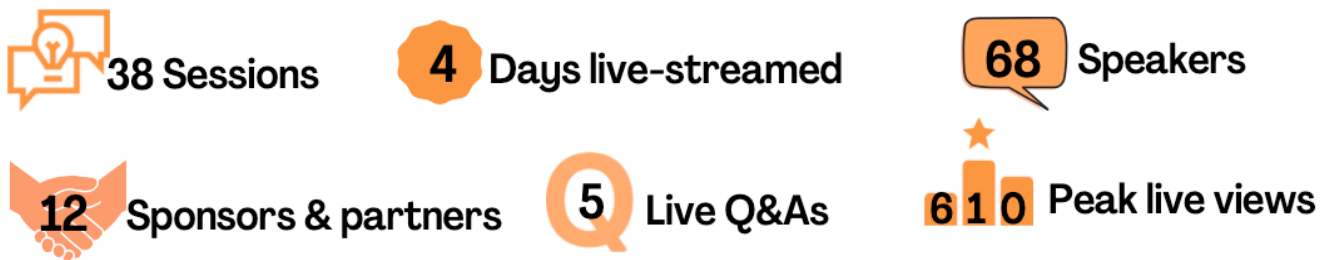
Kitso Pelmo Wangdi

Introduction

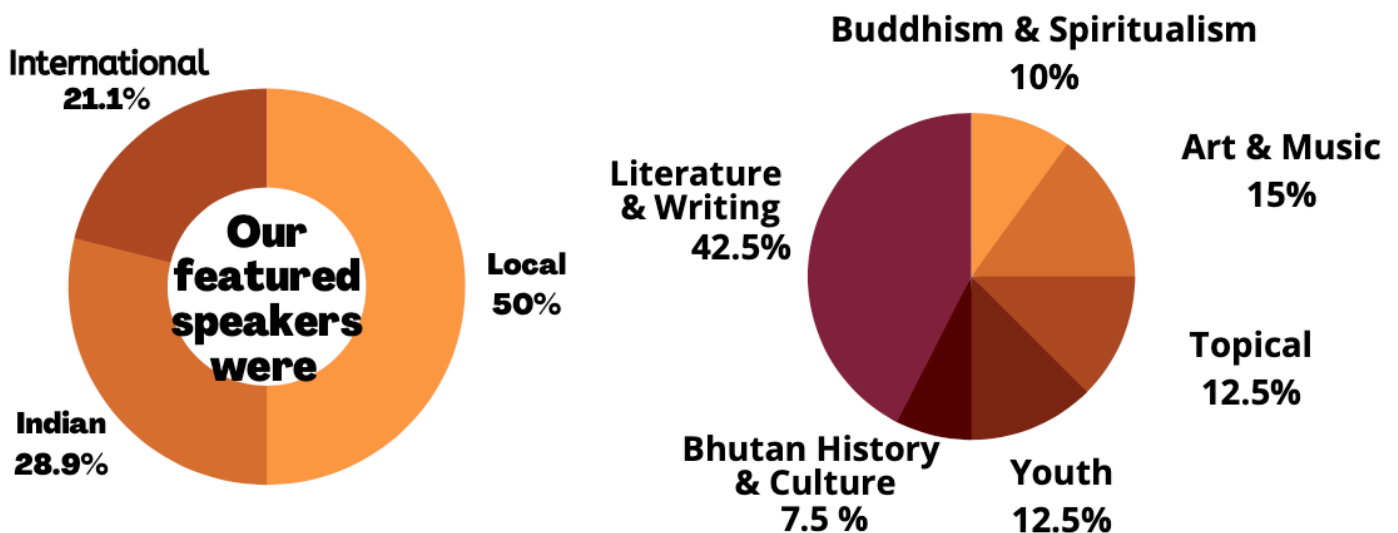
Riding on the theme – ‘Stories and Ideas for a Changing World, the Bhutan Echoes, Drukyl’s Literature Festival is a celebration of art, literature, creativity and talent with a focus on socio-economic, cultural, environmental and technological changes in Bhutan and around the world. The four-day festival was conducted virtually through social media live-streaming due to the restrictions imposed by the coronavirus pandemic.

With a total of 68 speakers, the festival presented wide ranging discussions packed with useful information and the topics ranged from Buddhism, climate change and environment, tourism, history, language, poetry, entrepreneurship to social stigma faced by LGBTQI+ members and Gross National Happiness among others.

The speakers presented their publications and works of art and shared their personal journeys filled with adventure, creativity, crisis, challenges, and fulfillment.



More than a quarter of all our speakers were youth under 30
About 1000 followers gained on IG during promotion period



DAY 1

Friday, April 22 2022

The festival kick started with a musical performance by dancers from the Royal Academy of Performing Arts (RAPA) followed by virtual lifting of the curtain by Her Majesty Gyalyum Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck. Producer of the festival, Kitso Pelmo, welcomed Her Majesty and all the guests watching the festival virtually. The festival, she said, will celebrate and discuss progressive changes in Bhutan and around the world including socio-economic, cultural, environmental and technological change.

Festival Director Kelly Dorji said the erstwhile Mountain Echoes which was co-founded by the Queen Mother Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck as an Indo-Bhutan initiative was successful in attracting many international literary figures and artists. In 2020, the festival was renamed by His Majesty the King as Bhutan Echoes.

Opening Address by Her Majesty Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck

“It is my dream to see Bhutan Echoes inspire young Bhutanese to realize their aspirations.”

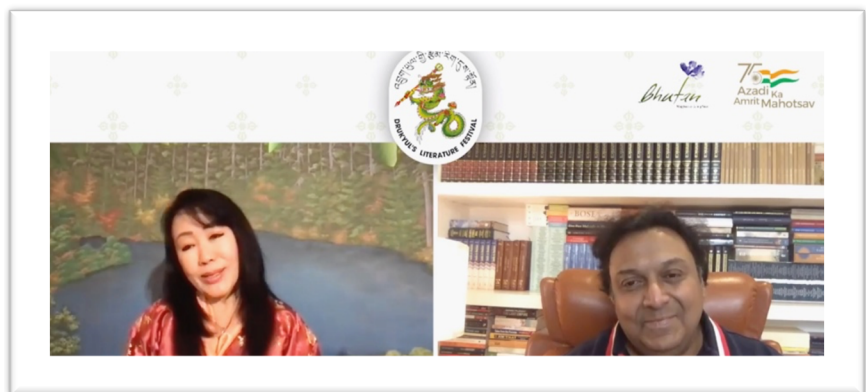
Her Majesty the Queen Mother Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck with great pride launched Drukylu’s Literature Festival 2022 that is organized by an all Bhutanese team.

Her Majesty expressed her gratitude to Mountain Echoes and the experience and training gained during the years which led to our own Bhutan Echoes. Encouraging and inspiring the youth to hone their talents, Her Majesty said that if our young people set their minds, there is nothing that they cannot achieve. With the festival featuring a series of young speakers, Her Majesty expressed, her hope and confidence that Bhutan will excel beautifully.

In what she called the beginning of a long and beautiful journey in the celebration of the arts, literature, creativity and talent, Her Majesty hopes to see each edition of Bhutan Echoes becoming better and more inspiring than the last.

The Stories Behind the Vault of Vishnu

Her Majesty the Queen Mother, Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck talked with Ashwin Sanghi, reconnecting over shared memories. Ashwin Sanghi is one of India’s top fiction author who weaves mystery, myth, crime, fiction, and self-help in his books.



Talking about her writing process of travelling to remote corners of the country to capture and understand the true picture of Bhutan, Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck said she came up with the idea of setting up the Tarayana foundation which provides micro credit, and opportunities for farmers to enhance their income.

The two speakers also talked about their fascination of Buddhism, the law of Karma and the cycle of existence through the works of Brian Weiss and Raymond Moody.

The Life of Guru Rinpoche



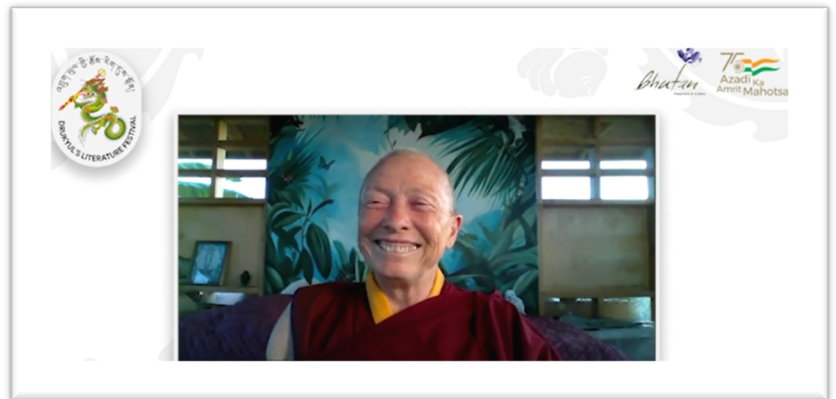
*In this session which was held in Dzongkha with English subtitles, **Lopen (Dr) Karma Phuntsho** and **Needrup Zangpo** discussed the person and legend of Guru Rinpoche, one of the most revered religious figures of Bhutan.*

Discussing the recently published book titled “The Life and Deeds of Guru Padmasambhava,” the session brought to light the importance and relevance of Guru Padmasambhava to Bhutan in terms of history, culture, literature, scripture, art and crafts and governance.

The main purpose and objective of the book according to Dr Karma Phuntsho was to capture and document the life and deeds of the great Tantric Master in Bhutan since most of the Guru’s hagiographies has only scarce mention of him in Bhutan.

Women in Buddhist Traditions

*This conversation between **Aum Pek Dorji** and **Venerable Karma Lekshe Tsomo** explored the contribution of women to Buddhism and the relevance of dharma in today’s world. The session discussed the *Sakadhita (Daughters of Buddha)* and *Jamyang Foundation* and how their work empowers women to transform themselves as well as communities.*



The speakers brought to the discussion the issue of gender discrimination in Buddhist traditions and the urgent need for women empowerment and to revive and retell the stories of accomplished Buddhist nuns to inspire and encourage other women. Women are generally invisible, unrepresented, and also do not have access to certain teachings.

Karma Lekshe Tsomo said Buddhism offers a practical and useful technique to calm the mind and thoughts of anger, desire and jealousy through study and practice.

Understanding Bhutan's History Through Text and Tongues

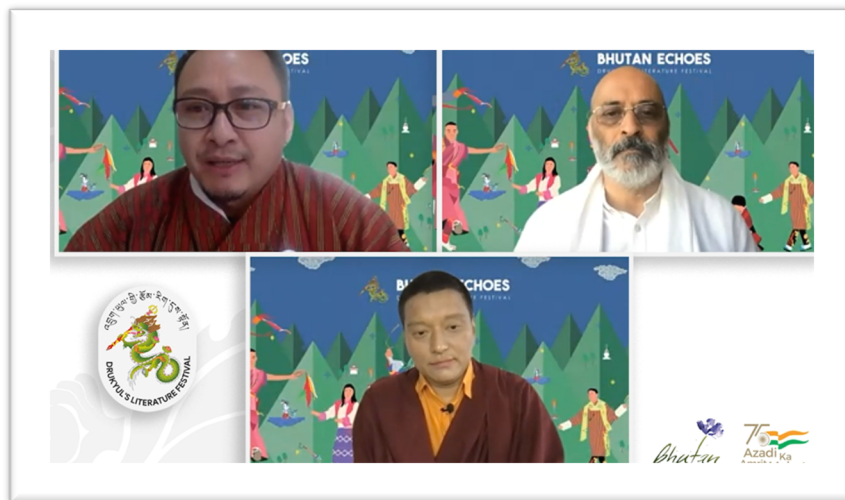


*In this session, **Dr Francoise Pomaret** in conversation with **Dechen Rabgyel** offered a wealth of insight on the relevance of history in Bhutan with a focus on preserving both written and oral forms of history.*

The session not only highlighted the importance of history and culture but also delved into Bhutan's oral history such as *Lozay* and *Tsangmo*. With much of Bhutan's history written and composed by monks, it took a form where the lives of ordinary people have not been reflected much. However, oral histories like *Lozay* records the lives of ordinary people and gives us a glimpse into the social life, economy, and environment of that time.

The session also highlighted the issue of women representation in history books.

Living Mindfully During Covid and Beyond



***Dharmacharya Shantum Seth** and **His Eminence the Neyphug Trulku Ngawang Sherdrup**, talked to **Damcho Rinzin** about the importance of meditation and*

Presenting the idea that Buddhism is not a religion but a philosophy, the speakers exposed how Buddhism has been mistakenly viewed by most Bhutanese, going against the very basic teaching of the Buddha Sakyamuni who said “you are your own refuge” when people seek refuge in a god or a Buddha.

Druk Lozay

Lopen Tandin Tshering introduced the viewers to different forms of Lozay, an age-old oral Bhutanese folk tradition that is usually sung in western parts of Bhutan

Lopen Tandin Tshering shared the diversity of Bhutan’s rich and unique culture of oral storytelling through Lozay. Usually, cited during gatherings, men, women and children, engage in a contest of sort, individually or in groups. Lozay is a popular form of entertainment in Dzongkha-speaking communities of western Bhutan.

Lozay existed as a vital means of interaction with friends, lovers and enemies because of its multi-functional expression of love, friendship, courtship, dislike or insult, praise through use of metaphors and symbols to express feelings and opinions.



Two Literary Matriarchs

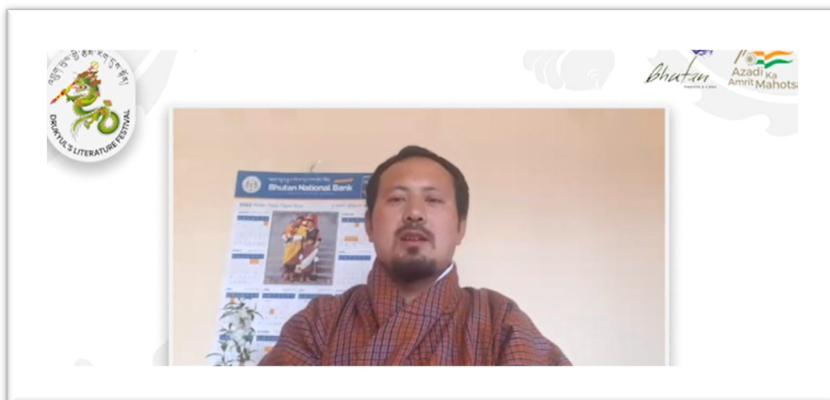
Indian author Namita Gokhale discussed the experiences of writing her latest novel, “The blind Matriarch” with her longtime friend Bhutanese author Kunzang Choden.

In the session, Namita describes how her experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic shaped her book.

Namita Gokhale talked about her twentieth book, “The Blind Matriarch” which is a real time narrative of India’s encounter with the pandemic. The story inspires love and loss, resilience and triumph of the human spirit and resonates with everyone who has survived the pandemic.



Lhoyi Chojung



Lopen Rinchen Yoeser, a seasoned researcher and translator, talks about the importance of recording our own history. Lopen translated the Lhoyi Chojung, which was originally written by the 10th Je Khenpo, Panchen Tenzin Chogyal.

Committed to writing 51 years after the passing of the Zhabdrung by Panchen Tenzin Chogyal, Lhoyi Chojung is the history of how Buddhism spread

overtime in Bhutan. The need was felt to document the laws in Bhutan and the dual system of governance introduced by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel.

The goal of translating the Lhoyi Chojung was to educate Bhutanese about our history and to encourage reading dzongkha and for the benefit of all. While the actual text is in Choekey (classical Tibetan), Lopen Rinchen Yoeser translated it into dzongkha.

Debut Writing

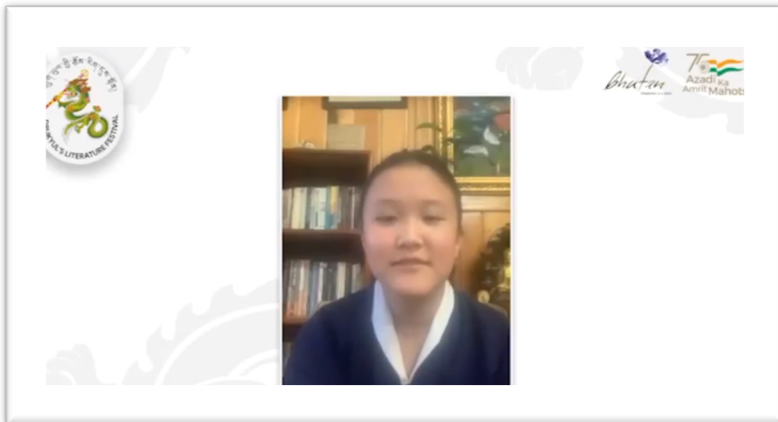
In this session, debut author, Shivani Sibal talked to Chimi Nangsel Dorji about the experiences of writing her first novel, “Equations.” Shivani Sibal described how her desire to tell the story of changing times compelled her to become a writer.

Discussing her first book which follows the story of two boys in Delhi brought up under the care of the same woman, living in the same house, but with starkly different realities, Shivani Sibal said the book was inspired by her childhood days.

The speaker ended by saying good literature should not be counted by what you should write or shouldn’t write. Her writings, she said, follows a nonlinear pattern because that’s how the human memory works.



Poetry Reading by Pema Yangsel



Pema Yangsel Dorji, writer of “Worlds of Wonder,” read her favorite passage from her book which was inspired by her cousin.

Pema Yangsel Dorji a class 9 student and the author of “Worlds of Wonder” said she always loved reading fantasy fiction. Her obsession with Harry Porter and Percy Jackson inspired her to write. The book is inspired by her own dreams as well as real life events.

Worlds of Wonder, she said is conceptualized on human co-existence with demon, vampires and gods. She utilized her free time during the Covid lockdowns to research on her book. Currently, she said that she finished writing a sequel and is already working on the third part of the sequel.

DAY 2

Saturday, April 23 2022

Opening Remarks and Q&A with Her Excellency, Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj



*Having delivered her opening remarks, **Her Excellency Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj** shared anecdotes of her experiences and stories from Bhutan.*

Ambassador of India to Bhutan Her Excellency Ruchira Kamboj talked about her first meeting with the King of Bhutan and the inspiration she drew from His Majesty's compassion, grace and humility. She applauded the special relationship that Bhutan shares with India.

Her Excellency also paid tribute to Her Majesty the Queen Mother Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck, for her idea and enthusiasm towards Mountain Echoes which has now transitioned to Bhutan Echoes.

As the festival continues to celebrate literature, arts, and culture, Her Excellency said that it will further improve people-to-people relationship between Bhutan and India.

Water

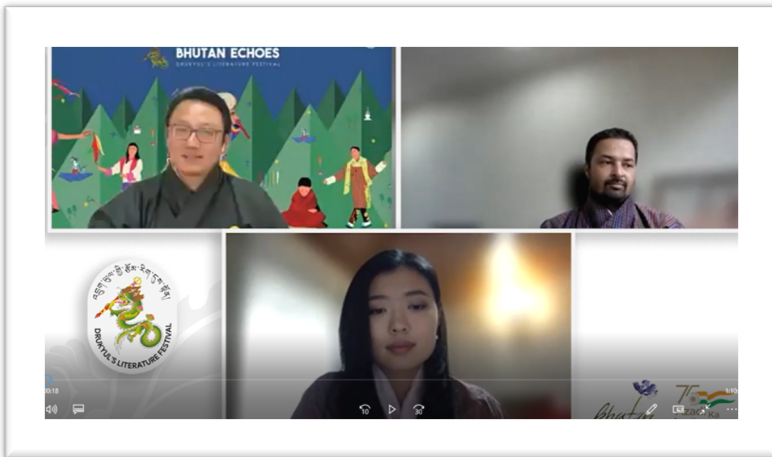
*Award-winning conservationist and author of several books on global freshwater issues, **Sandra Postel**, in conversation with **Jigchen Lhazom Norbu** talked about the value of water and climate change.*

Sandra Postel's conversation began with a short narrative about her early days and her calling to do something on behalf of Earth. Her first book, "Last Oasis" is a wakeup call to the world to pay attention to how water affects food, ecosystem and environment as well as social and political stability. She stressed the need for rich countries that caused and contributed to climate change to do more in preserving the environment.

The session highlighted the urgent need to communicate to policy makers about the importance to preserve ecosystem.



Digital Transformation



*Ujjwal Deep Dahal and Zina Choden Yonten in conversation with **Rabsel Dorji** discussed the technological advances made in the world and Bhutan’s digital transformation journey, along with its opportunities and challenges.*

This session highlighted the importance of leveraging technology for economic development. For technology to be the main driving force for economic growth, Ujjwal Deep Dahal said that infrastructures such as affordable internet and power supply was needed. He presented the collaboration model

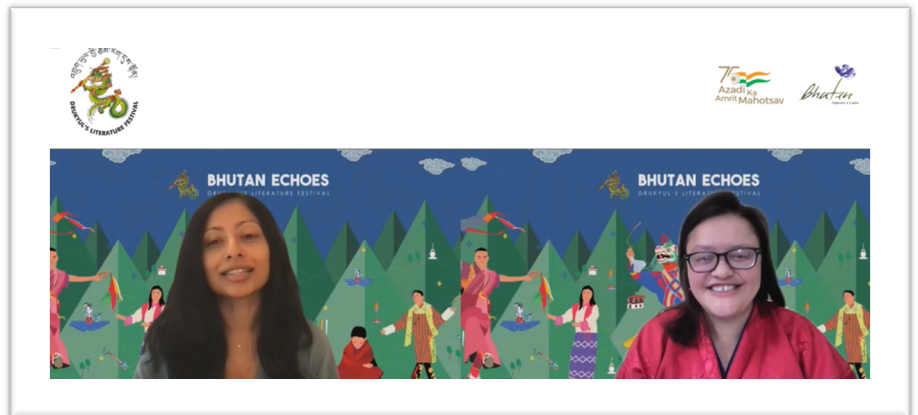
called the triple helix which shows a synergy between the industry, the academy and the government.

Zina Choden Yonten talked about project Fab Lab which works towards sparking technological interest in students, help startups develop products for the local and global market and provide resources for companies.

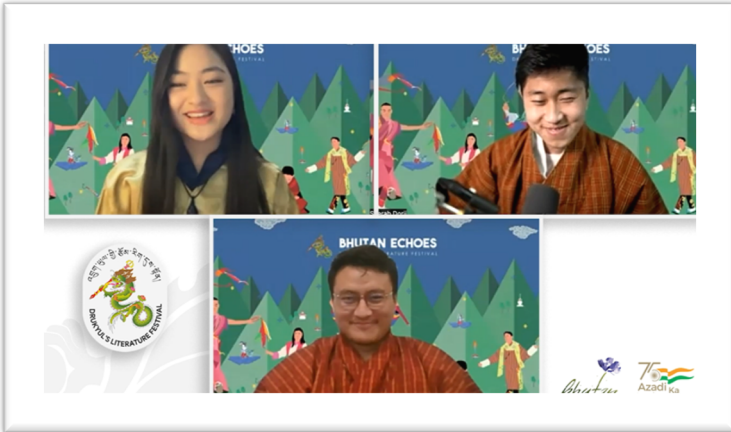
Not So Nice Women

*Booker Prize-nominated author **Avni Doshi** in conversation with Director **Dolma Choden Roder** talked about her critically acclaimed debut novel “*Burnt Sugar*.” They also explored ideas such as ambivalence around motherhood and women’s anger.*

In *Burnt Sugar*, the narrator, Antara, comes off as a blunt and observant character. Avni Doshi said that with women narrators, expectations of likability, and gentle personalities were expected. Also, women who tend to “step outside of bounds” are treated like an outcast and dehumanized. The moment of conflict or paradox is the central theme of Avni Doshi’s book. While motherhood could mean life, it could also mean death.



Behind the Scenes with the Crew from Lunana: A Yak in the Classroom



Lead actors **Sherab Dorji** and **Ugyen Norbu Lhendup** from “Lunana: A Yak in the Classroom,” shared their experiences of filming and their acting journey.

The actors shared their experiences of auditioning for the Oscar nominated, “Lunana: A Yak in the Classroom.” While Sherab plays the lead role, Ugyen took the role of Michen (giant). For about three months, the actors took various acting and dialogue lessons.

The movie is based on snippets of real-life stories by the director Pawo Chonying Dorji. The central message of the film is about how city life does not guarantee happiness.

Ultimate Play: His Life

*Celebrated Taiwanese playwright and director **Stan Lai** in conversation with Director **Sonam Wangmo Dukpa-Jhalani** talked about his love for the stage and telling stories.*

Stan Lai talked about the relationship between Taiwan and China and how an exodus of 2 million people from China to Taiwan in 1949 transformed the lives of the people.



He also shared about how Het Werkteater, a Dutch theater group that creates socially relevant plays through improvisation, inspired his own works. The plays of Het Werkteater, Stan Lai said touches and unites a society and the theater creates a forum for people to exchange ideas at a deeper level.

The Man Behind Wai Wai Noodles

Binod K Chaudhary, Nepalese entrepreneur in conversation with **Sangay Tshering** explored the wai wai noodle's journey and discussed his book, "Making it Big"



Nepalese billionaire Binod Chaudhary ventured into Wai Wai noodle production when he realized Nepal imported huge amounts of noodles from Thailand. Despite the initial challenges, today there are 27 factories around the world which sells more than 2 billion packets of Wai Wai a day.

Chairman Binod Chaudhary said entrepreneurship is not an inborn skill, but something that can be learnt through time management, discipline, belief in the self and a strong vision and courage.

Buddhism and Art

As a Buddhist practitioner and artist, **Lhaksam Tempey Gyeltshen** talked about how one could apply Buddhism to art.

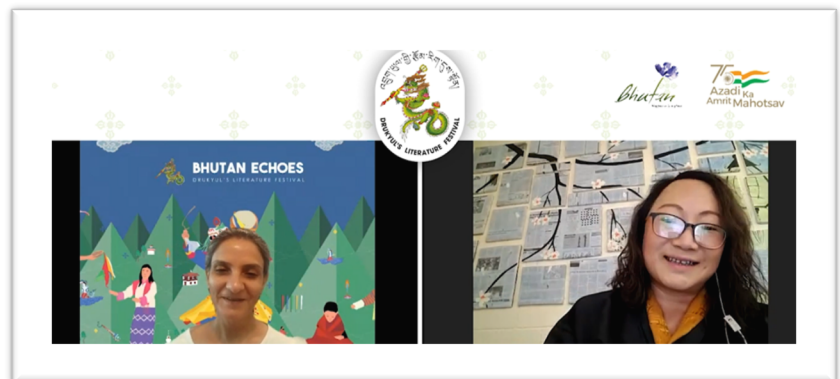


Surrounded by art during his monastic education, Lhaksam Tempey Gyeltshen said envisioning Guru Rinpoche and Manjushri when practicing inspired him to work on arts. Art, he said makes us aware of one's history.

Writer **Mita Kapur** conversed with **Tshering Chhoden Wangdi** about various stories from her book and her inspiration for writing.

Mita Kapur was invited to be part of Mountain Echoes in 2010 and worked closely with Her Majesty Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck, Namita Gokhale and former ambassador Pavan K Varma.

The F-Word



Speaking about her book "The F-Word," Mita Kapur said that the book was part memoir, travelogue and part recipe. Mita Kapur shared that her love for cooking comes from seeing contentment in the faces of those who eat her meals. Despite the shift to ordering food instead of cooking during festivals, she said she insisted on making a few dishes of her own to celebrate the festival.

DAY 3

Sunday, April 24, 2022

Opening Remarks by TCB Director General, Dorji Dradhul



Setting the context for the day, **Dorji Dradhul** stressed on the importance of sustainable development while taking care of our culture, tradition, nature and happiness. Climate change is becoming worse and it could wipe out the human race. Dorji Dradhul said change and progress towards a society that takes care of the environment is possible with good leadership. Bhutan is fortunate due to His Majesty's leadership, love and selflessness. The world would be a much better place if there were more leaders like our king, he said.

Reshaping Tourism in Bhutan Post-Covid

Sonam Wangchuk, Chairman of the Hotel and Restaurant Association of Bhutan and Sonam Dorji, Executive Director of the Association of Bhutanese Tour Operators talked with Pema Lama of Bhutan Ecological Society about the impact of the pandemic on tourism and way forward.

The tourism industry, Bhutan's biggest convertible currency earner and employment generator came to a standstill with the start of the pandemic. Going forward, the speakers said there is a need to create proper logistics and also policy interventions as the sector gradually opens up, post-pandemic.

Some of the new measures proposed include revisiting flight schedules, incentives and discounts, deferring the sustainable development fees for regional tourists and improving communication between the government and tour operators.



The Invention of Disobedience

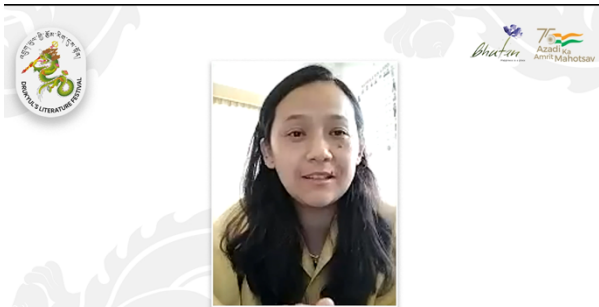
Martina Clavadetscher talked about her sci-fi and neo-gothic novel "The Invention of Disobedience"

Reading out an excerpt from her novel, "The Invention of Disobedience," Martina Clavadetscher recalled the images of sex dolls and naked female bodies that 'irritated' and 'fascinated' her at the same time. Her book explores the idea of women's identity, voice, hierarchy and power.



The author said while it is fun to create characters that was neither clearly human nor clearly artificial, emotions, empathy, and creativity are what makes us all humans.

The Importance of Youth Seeing Themselves in Books



Kezang Choden, Country manager of READ Bhutan talked about the importance of youth seeing themselves in books and discussed the book, “Agay Phurba.”

To document local folktales and legends, Read Bhutan implemented the project, Bhutan folktales in 2016. Children took part in story telling sessions by the village elderlies and were later trained to write and illustrate. Through this project, four books, two each from Yangthang, Haa and Rongthong,

Trashigang were published. With the success of the project, it was replicated in Bumthang, Punakha, Trashiyangtse, and Pemagatshel. Between 2018 and 2019 two books each from these communities were published.

Of all stories, only “Agay Phurba” and “The Dancing Cranes,” a story from Trashiyangtse was a realistic fiction. “Agay Phurba” has been working with RSPN in conserving the cranes for over 41 years. At the festival, students from Trashiyangtse Lower Secondary School narrated the story.



Anatomy of a B-Pop Song

Music producer Choeying Jatsho in conversation with Jamtsho Tshering explored the song-writing process

Concerns over creativity and commercialization often lingers in the minds of music professionals like Choeying Jatsho who founded the popular M-studio. On the creativity aspect, which is often driven by passion, it is best to pursue a project in collaboration with like-minded people. This passion project has helped M-Studio evolve as a free company where people are not bound by contracts but their love of music. “It (M-Studio) has grown into a family now,” remarked the founder.



Preserving the Myths of Manipur



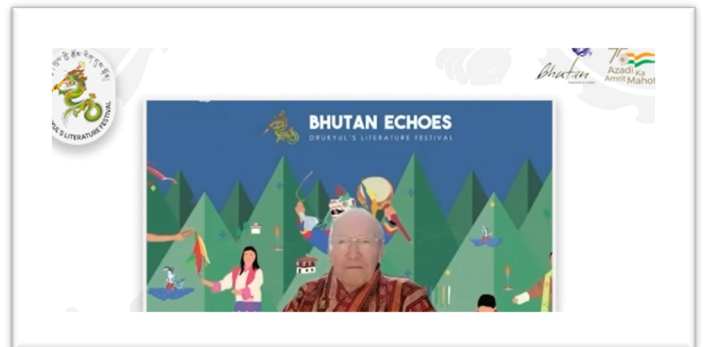
*Author **Somi L Roy** and **Dr Sapha Yumnam** in conversation with **Dasho Kinley Dorji** discussed the preservation of Manipur’s culture in the face of rapid globalization and digitization*

Author Somi Roy’s book seeks to converge the unique and diverse identity, culture and history of India into one shared national purpose. His underlying message is that the world is same everywhere and only perspectives differ.

Small communities like Manipur and Bhutan face the risk of ‘cultural gray-out’ and therefore, we must define and identify ourselves with stories, he said. Roy’s inspiration came from art, fortune telling, and his fascination with sorcery and magic.

Words Matter: Did Shakespeare Get it Wrong?

Michael Rutland led the audience to understanding the versatility and usage of words by different types of people for various occasions in their lives “Long words are often used for bad reasons,” he said. This is usually done to show off one’s cleverness, to impress the listener, to pass an exam or to deceive. Politicians, he said often purposefully use complicated words to confuse. For instance, UK’s Prime Minister Boris Johnson even used Latin words in his speeches.



Michael Rutland then talked about the importance of communicating correct meanings, choice of words and the importance of learning the meaning of words beyond what is defined in the dictionary.

Writing Process Unveiled



*Authors **Chablop Passu** and **Tshering Wangchuk** spoke with **Utsav Khatiwara Sharma** about their experiences to demystify the various stages of the writing process including drafting, editing, and proofreading as well as offering some insight into the publishing process.*

Writing involves both art and craft. While art or the creative aspect should come from oneself, craft can be taught to students. Craft basically involves a process of

writing effectively and to transform thoughts and ideas into well-polished reading materials.

Presenting the four roles one assumes while following a structured writing process, Utsav Khatiwara said the first role is that of a madman where you simply jot down thoughts as they arise, the second is that of an architect, where you start building on your information, the third role is that of a carpenter, where you begin structuring and fixing the tiny details and the final role is that of a judge, where you look and judge your own work.

The session also highlighted the importance of good editing.

Getting Books Published

Established editor and publisher, Priya Kapoor in conversation with Palden Tshering discussed her journey with Roli Books, one of the oldest publishing houses in India.

While talking about the journey of Roli Books, Priya Kapoor said a sense of passion, work ethic and dedication are some of the essential qualities to succeed in life. Roli Books began as a publisher of coffee table books and gradually diversified into others including fictions and nonfictions, and illustrated books.

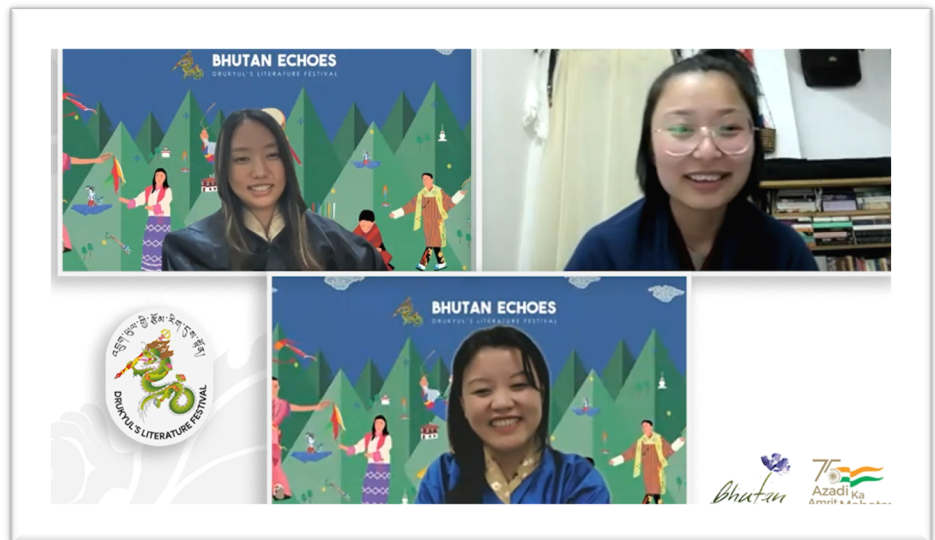
Priya Kapoor also stated that the problem is not whether people are reading on their iPad or an actual book, but that people don't read at all. With too much distractions today, she said people are only used to consuming bite-sized information. But there is huge opportunity in India because although the market might be small, there is still a lot of room for growth.



Sung: Tales for the Little Ones

Children's book authors Chador Wangmo and Yeshi Tsheyang Zam in conversation with Yangday La discussed the importance of children's literature as well as how to write stories with children and for children

With a keen sense of creativity and freedom and a sense of wonder, Chador Wangmo grew up at a time when books and reading were totally unheard of in Bhutan. Sitting by the fireplace and listening to stories told by elders was the only form of entertainment then. But sixteen-year-old Yeshey Tsheyang, a writer from a totally different generation



has a different story to tell altogether. But the two speakers agreed that reading is an indispensable part of writing.

Bumchu in the Moon

*Eight-year-old storyteller **Karma Sonam Demath** narrated a folktale of ‘Achu Daka’ with illustrator **Tandin Dorji** and Flutist **Pema Samdrup**.*

Eight-year-old Karma Sonam Demath narrated a folktale of Achu Daka. The narration was infused with melodic flute performance by Pema Samdrup dramatizing different plots of the story. As the session progressed, illustrator Tandin Dorji captured the marvel unfolding in the form of art, making it visually spectacular.



Special Session by Sonam Wangchuk



*In this special session, **Sonam Wangchuk**, an innovator and education reformist who is most popularly associated with the character of Phuntshok Wangdu from the movie *3 Idiots* talked about finding solutions for mountain people through innovations.*

Sharing his insights on the education system and how he uses innovation and technology to improve the learning experiences as well as livelihood of mountain people, Sonam Wangchuk said he gives children hands-on experiences by allowing students to form and run governments, hold elections and do agri-business.

“Teenagers can be amazing partners if given responsibility and respect, rather than treating them as problems to be moved around,” he stated.

In the University of Alternatives that he founded in Ladakh, his unique innovations using technology includes enhancing internet connectivity using mountains as towers, ice stupas that supply water in the dry season and solar heating.

DAY 4

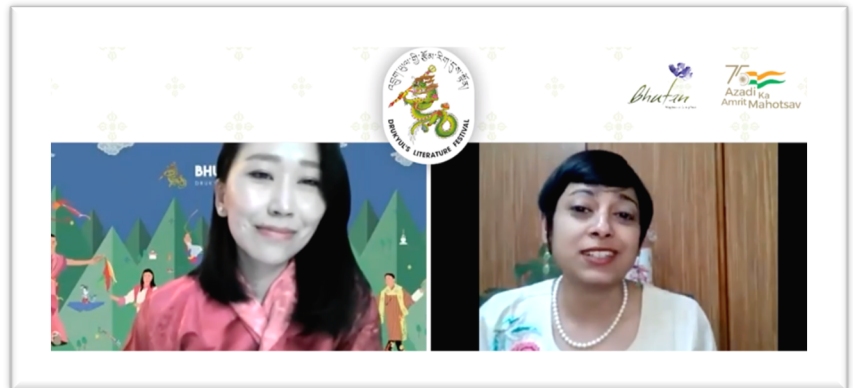
Monday April 25, 2022

Poetry for the Soul

Poet and academician **Jhilam Chattaraj** talked about her recent poetry collection, “*Noise Cancellation: Poems*” with Bhutanese poet **Sadon Lhamo**.

Poetry is a space of uncertainty – a poem is never complete and has no destination. Her collection of poems, *Noise Cancellation* is about cancelling distractions of the psychological, cultural and digital world. Jhilam Chattaraj discovered how language can seep into one’s bones and create miracles in the mind.

For a beginner, she said putting ideas into paper as it comes and being honest to the thought process is an important step. But as one grows and mature as a poet, understanding different forms and styles is crucial to channelize the thought process.



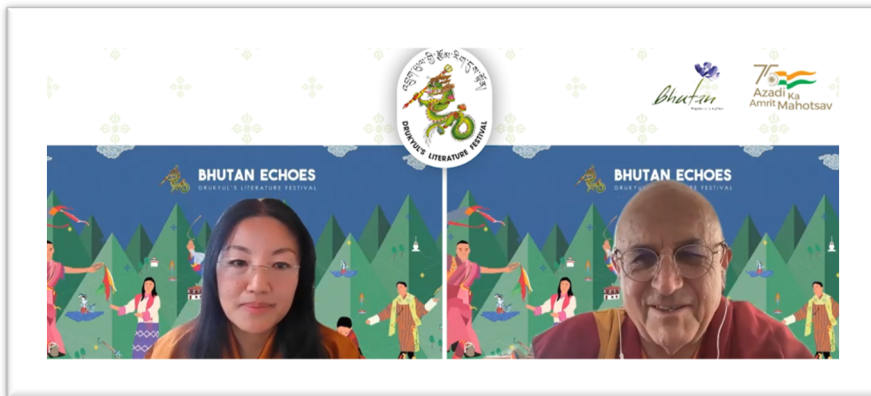
The Unwicked World

Author and Buddhist teacher **Matthieu Ricard**, in conversation with archaeologist **Dr Kuenga Wangmo** discussed spiritualism within the context of today’s practical situation and challenges. He blended spiritualism into topics and issues regarding vegetarianism and animal well-being, and environmental justice.

Matthieu Ricard juxtaposed the idea of selfishness with genuine altruism, cooperation, solidarity and universal

responsibility and interdependence. It is possible to change our brains by training our minds and refining our culture, he stated.

Taking advantage of other species by taking away their liberty and deciding how, where and when animals should live and die is morally unacceptable. While it is very much an ethical issue, it is also not good for humans in terms of health, environment and social justice, he said.

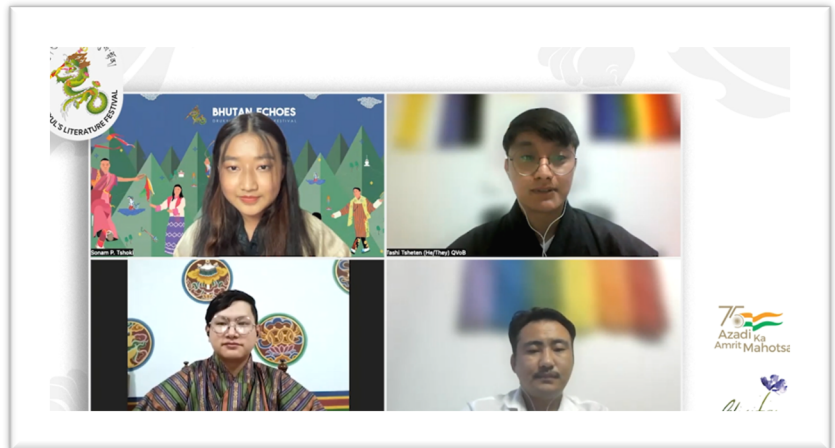


More Than Not Criminals

Tenzin Gyeltshen from Pride Bhutan and Tashi Tsheten and Pema Dorji from QVoB (Queer Voices of Bhutan) discussed with Sonam Pem Tshoki on how Bhutan and allies in the community have and can continue to work together to create a truly inclusive society

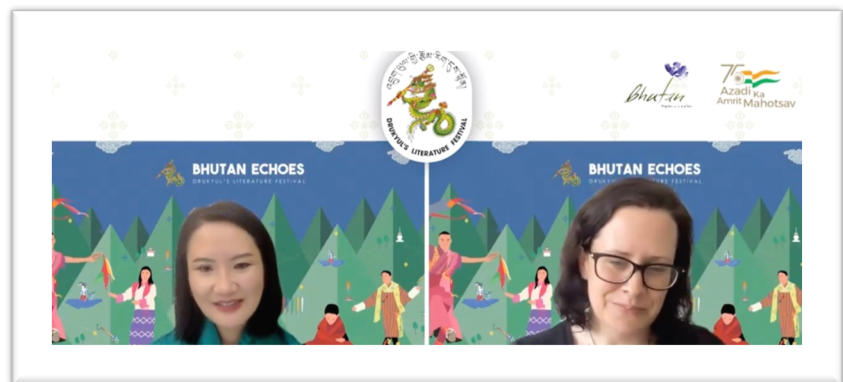
The LGBTQI+ community in Bhutan celebrated their joy when the parliament decriminalized homosexuality in 2020. While no one from the community came in direct conflict with the law, this penal code clause which criminalized same sex activity had created a lot of problems for the LGBTQI+ members. It had exposed some of the members to harassment and blackmail.

Tenzin Gyeltshen said while decriminalizing homosexuality is a positive development, the battle is far from over and there are still many in the LGBTQI+ community dropping out of schools and resorting to drugs and alcohol to cope with their mental stress. He emphasized the importance of stories; through impactful and positive stories, policies can be changed or influenced and the community will be well educated on such matters.



Award-winning journalist Megan Stack and Director Sonam Wangmo Dukpa-Jhalani talked about her recent memoir, “Women’s work: A personal reckoning with labour, motherhood and privilege,” which details her own experience of raising her children in India and China, and learning about the lives of the women who she hired to help her.

Women’s Work



Reflecting and contemplating on the lives of domestic workers who, she came to understand, were also wives, mothers and daughters to someone, she decided to put it down in her memoir. While journalism always required her to keep a certain emotional distance with the stories, the memoir is very personal. Her book unfolds the story of three women, presenting them under different circumstance in life.

Stories I Must Tell

In this session legendary actor **Kabir Bedi** conversed with actor **Kelly Dorji** to share a series of fascinating anecdotes from his book, “*Stories I Must Tell, An Emotional Life of an Actor.*”

“It is important in life to be vulnerable and to show one’s weaknesses. There are enough stories of triumphs and victories but not so much about vulnerabilities and weaknesses. Through mistakes and understanding our own weaknesses we can reinvent and resurrect our lives.” Kabir Bedi said.

Responding to a question on method acting, Kabir Bedi said that, entering the role of a character is fun and challenging at the same time. Some roles require enormous concentration but it is unwise to lose yourself completely in the role. “An actor can never lose himself or herself completely into the character.”

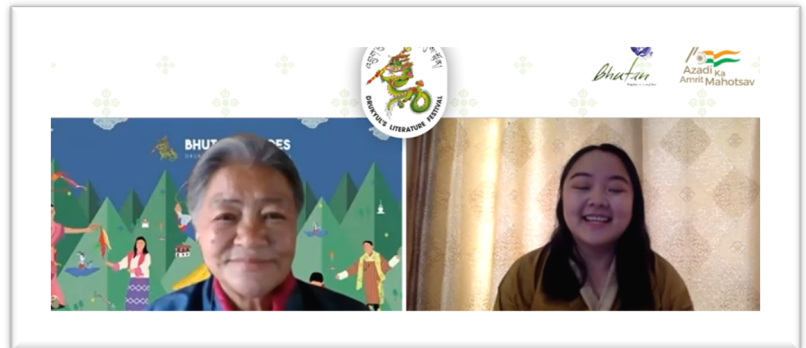


Monkey Mind

This session introduced **Kunzang Choden’s** book, “*Monks Chasing Monkey,*” a story of modern Bhutan and a moving tribute to the ordinary lives navigating unknowable complexities every day and the protagonist’s journey to finding his spiritual self.

Kunzang Choden’s latest novel, “*Monks Chasing Monkey*” was inspired by the concept of meditation and ‘monkey mind.’ She said she had wondered what it would lead to if you allow your mind to go wherever it leads. The book visits every district in the country and then describes some aspect of that district. The protagonist was inspired by an actual monk whom she had met in a hermitage.

She said in Bhutan, young boys are ordained as monks even without their own consent and depriving them from so many opportunities and possibilities. Children must be given a chance and a choice in life, she conveyed.



To Know and To Trust Strangers

Journalist **Colleen Kinder** talks to **Gopilal Acharya** about the epistolary collection of essays, “*Letters to a Stranger: Essays to The One Who Haunts Us*” that she recently curated.

Getting to know oneself better and to seek purpose in life is what shaped Colleen Kinder’s collection of essays. The book navigates through the grey areas that solo

travelers has to endure and trusting strangers as they travel around in unfamiliar places. Trust is a big element in travel because it opens up her vulnerability.

Colleen Kinder discussed about seeing something of you in another human being and having a sense of connection to them. She describes this as something that is very powerful and beautiful.

Dance As A Form of Art

In this session, professional dancer, **Karma Chuki** in conversation with **Sushmita Mongar** talked about Karma’s dance career journey and how dance transmits culture, emotions, tell stories and the courage to experience change and heal.

Having always been interested in physical activities and sports, Karma Chuki’s passion for dancing led her to India and to several places to study it.

In Bhutan, she said, dancing is not seen as a profession but as a hobby. But to take dancing seriously in life requires huge amounts of commitment, dedication, discipline and resilience while the remuneration is always less.

She shared the trials and tribulations of her journey and also some life lessons on how we should follow our dreams with humility, determination, patience, passion, laser focus and the zeal to always learn something new every moment in life. “Dancing requires flexibility both in your body and your mind.”



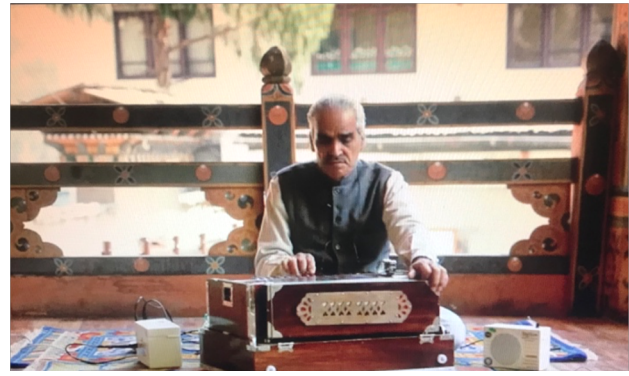
Performances



Traditional Dance and Music Performed by Artists from the Royal Academy of Performing Arts



Dancer Karma Chuki



Classical Indian Music by Mr. Kamer Singh



Dance by Gokab

Workshops

Yoga for Beginners with Guru Shri KVSSN Murthy

Held at the grounds of the Folk Heritage Museum on April 24, 2022. Guruji introduced participants to various beginner poses to stretch, align and strengthen the body and spirit.



Shadow Puppet Theatre with Charmi Cheda

Held on April 24, 2022 at the premises of the Office of the Vice-chancellor, Royal University of Bhutan. The workshop catered to children who were taught how to make shadow puppets and how to use light to cast shadows that move and can tell a story.



Best Foot Forward: Virtual Workshop on CV and Resume Writing with WiselyBt

Held virtually via ZOOM on April 23,2022. During the 2-hr workshop, facilitator Namgay Choden helped young Bhutanese articulate their educational, professional and personal experiences to curate their CV/ Resume for different jobs.

From Fearful to Fluent with Upskill Bhutan

Held on April 23 and 24,2022 at the premises of the Office of the Vice-Chancellor, Royal University of Bhutan. The workshop on public speaking helped participants focus on cues to help them make a conscientious effort to improve their communication skills.



Monthly Programs

Book Launches

With the objective to inspire and nurture literary culture in the country, Bhutan Echoes has started the monthly programs. The monthly programs were kick-started by the book launch of *A Thousand Footprints* by Tshering Wangchuk on October 31, 2021, followed by the book launch of *Just the Way it is* by Karma Tsering on November 27, 2021.



As a part of the monthly programs' aim to promote and support local engagement, Bhutan Echoes hosted a Spoken Word Open Mic Night at Mojo Park on December 26th, 2021.

Spoken Word: Open Mic Night

To promote and support local engagement, Bhutan Echoes hosted a Spoken Word Open Mic Night at Mojo Park on December 26th. This event included a live performance by the talented Yakam band, music guru Mr. Kamer Singh, writers, and poets from the Royal Thimphu College.

The purpose of this program was to celebrate young people, their voices and provide a platform for expression and creativity.





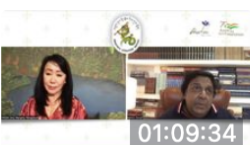


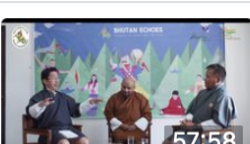


Digital Salon

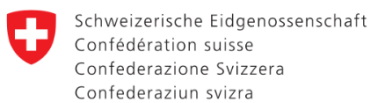
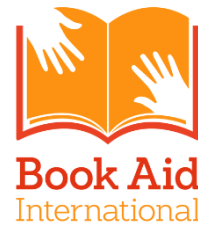
Digital Salon, a personalized event of Bhutan Echoes, features a series of intimate conversations with special guests to discuss literature, stories, art and idea. The Digital Salon of December and January featured Dasho Kinley Dorji and Dr Francoise Pommaret, respectively



Most Viewed Videos from the Festival

Video	Date added	Minutes viewed ↓
 <p>An innovative liv... Bhutan Echoes 16:37</p>	04/24/2022 6:05 PM Bhutan Echoes	179,356
 <p>Lopen Karma... Bhutan Echoes 01:02:02</p>	04/22/2022 6:25 PM Bhutan Echoes	84,638
 <p>Sonam Wangch... Bhutan Echoes 25:00</p>	04/24/2022 6:43 PM Bhutan Echoes	75,306
 <p>Lead actors... Bhutan Echoes 01:07:03</p>	04/23/2022 10:21 PM Bhutan Echoes	66,846
 <p>Her Majesty the... Bhutan Echoes 01:09:34</p>	04/23/2022 8:19 PM Bhutan Echoes	36,514
 <p>Drukyl's... Bhutan Echoes 08:00:09</p>	04/22/2022 9:30 AM Bhutan Echoes	34,388
 <p>Her Excellency... Bhutan Echoes 38:21</p>	04/23/2022 8:36 PM Bhutan Echoes	27,132
 <p>Authors Chablo... Bhutan Echoes 57:58</p>	04/24/2022 6:10 PM Bhutan Echoes	22,991

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