Happily and spontaneously, the Golden Fish (sernga) swim unobstructed through murky waters. They symbolize humankind’s ability to take correct actions in a challenging world.

(Below) With an elevation of 24,836 feet, Gangkar Punsum is the highest mountain in Bhutan and the highest unclimbed mountain in the world. Protection of these mountains and other natural resources is one of the four pillars of Gross National Happiness.

Gross National Happiness is far more important than Gross National Product.

— HM Jigme Singye Wangchuck
King of Bhutan (Fourth Druk Gyalpo), pictured here with a young boy.

Many people familiar with Bhutan know the importance the country places on promoting Gross National Happiness (GNH), as articulated by Bhutan’s Fourth King. Articles about Bhutan’s approach to GNH have commanded headlines in the Washington Post, the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, and countless periodicals around the world. The idea has been associated with the thinking of some Americans (most notably Thomas Jefferson) and has attracted worldwide attention among people who wish to broaden the concept of “good society,” given the complexity of the twenty-first century.

Gross National Happiness, a shared national objective, implies excellence in education and healthcare, robust economic opportunity, protection and celebration of cultural and environmental resources, and good governance. They are the four pillars of GNH in Bhutan.