The Lotus (pema) represents nonattachment—purity of body, mind, and speech.

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In recent years, Bhutan has opened its doors to increasing numbers of tourists. Because the first road was built in 1962 and the first airport was constructed in the 1980s, the country’s basic transportation infrastructure has required expansion to accommodate an influx of visitors.

In 2007, slightly over 20,000 people traveled to Bhutan—the most ever. Most visitors come to experience Bhutan’s pristine landscapes and cultural traditions that date to the arrival of Buddhism more than a thousand years ago. The Bhutanese government has recognized the importance of protecting the country’s unique resources as part of its effort to slowly increase tourism.

Too rapid an increase in tourism could harm Bhutan’s natural and cultural treasures. Accordingly, Bhutan is carefully following tourists’ suggestions for improved lodging and transportation while protecting the environment and traditions so attractive to most foreigners.