

Assistance for Bhutanese Refugees in Nepal through AHURA JAPAN¹⁾

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Abstract

In 2008 Bhutan changed from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional one, after 100 years of 'dictatorship', worldwide nobody had cared about it. Amnesty International has been the first actor examining the human rights violations in Bhutan in 1989/90. This involvement led finally to the founding of AHURA JAPAN (Association of Human Rights Activists Japan) in 1993. This NGO sent many appeal cards to many relevant politicians in Bhutan, Nepal, India and UN, asking for a political solution of the refugee issue.

The strategies of AHURA JAPAN had been a holistic one, not just focusing on one form of assistance, but in accordance of the needs of the refugees, implementing different activities the same time in a continuous way. It started with assistance for documentation, for treatment of torture and rape victims and providing assistance for different needing sectors in education. Most of the advocacy work focused on the dissemination of the truth about the history and present situation of the refugee issue within Japanese society.

The paper also examines the role of the (Japanese) media and society and the link between the refugee issue and the promulgation of GNH (Gross National Happiness) by the government of Bhutan, starting 1998. The essence of GNH is also analyzed.

1) This article is based on a paper, Manfred Ringhofer, "Assistance for Bhutanese Refugees in Nepal through AHURA JAPAN" presented at APPRA 2015 Conference (October 9th 2015, Nepal) .

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It also shows especially the role of UNHCR, in dealing with the conflict, which could not bring peace and justice to the refugees, only by sending them to third countries, which also divided the refugee community.

The implementing of 'democratic' features after 2008 and the 2010 census can be viewed as the consequences of worldwide activities criticizing Bhutan's handling of the refugee issue. The role of AHURA JAPAN can be seen as a small contribution to this process.

Keywords: Bhutanese refugees, NGO activities, GNH and 'democracy' in Bhutan, refugee policies

A. Involvement in the human rights issue of Bhutanese refugees through Amnesty International

January 1990 a letter addressed from headquarter of Amnesty (London) directly to Japan's Group 45 in Nara, (which chairperson I have been at that time), asking for writing cards and letters on behalf of one of the arrested democracy leaders, named Ratan Gazmere, in prison since November 1989. It was the first action of A.I. concerning human rights issues in Bhutan. For this prisoner of conscience also the German group of Schwalbach was active in sending cards on behalf of Ratan Gazmere. A meeting with 3 members of this group was held 1990, August 25, in Germany.

Appeal cards: 1990-91 sending hundreds of postcards in Japanese and English, with pictures of Buddhist temples or statues, to His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, and to the Ministers of Home and of Foreign Affairs in Bhutan asking for the release of Ratan Gazmere.

Contact person in Amnesty International London has been Liz Rowsell from the Asia Region Research Department. With her we exchanged a lot of letters since January 1991. Later this year she has been invited together with Ian Martin, Secretary General of Amnesty International, by King Jigme Wangchuck for a weeklong visit of Bhutan (prison visits, etc.) This visit and also Ratan Gazmere becoming prisoner of month in Sept. 1991 (thousands of cards arrived from all over the world and central post office in Thimphu had been very busy) had great effect concerning a quite better treatment

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of the prisoners of conscience regarding cloth, food, bath, medical assistance and even during Dasain on order of the King, they (after about two years in solely confinement) could leave the prison for one day, having picnic at a riverside, with alcohol and tobacco. Some weeks later on 17th December 1991, Ratan Gazmere together with some others and also in February many of the democracy movement leaders had been released.

But Ratan Gazmere fearing arrest, fled 3rd July 1992 from Thimphu to Nepal, where he arrived in Damak on 6th and later on founded AHURA Bhutan with other prisoners of conscience in 1992, on November 16th.

B. Foundation of AHURA JAPAN (Association of Human Rights Activists Japan)

7.7.1993

Background: The author of this article visited the refugee camps march 1993, (first of 14 visits) and had meetings with Mr. Baker (UNHCR), father D.K. Townsend (CARITAS NEPAL=in charge of Bhutanese Refugee Education Program). Meeting with Ratan Gazmere, his family, AHURA Bhutan's officers and could hear the stories of some refugees (for ex. Hari Adhikari Bangaley). Visiting BRAVVE (Mangala Sharma) and other NGO's. The sanitary and medical situation was still very bad, also school education (3 shifts!).

That time I attended also a small conference at Thribuvan University about education in Nepal (organized by NEDO·JAPAN/NEPAL).

Back in Japan the chairperson visited the press center at the Osaka Prefectural Building housing also the representative of 34 newspapers. But despite presenting him, who was also the representative of Asahi Newspaper a lot of information (in English, photos of torture victims) about the refugees, he did not write an article, but requested me after 6 weeks to write one myself.

Meeting Jeannie Donald

This has been the most important factor for founding AHURA JAPAN, because she knew the situation by her own experience. As an English teacher in Daga (1990-93) she arrived in a peaceful country, but some months later she heard rumors that Nepali Bhutanese try to topple the kingdom and she had to cut the hair of the female students

short like the women of the Ngalongs (the king's ethnic group).

One English teacher in her school, he was half Ngalong, half Nepali had been killed and also for many nights she could hear the screaming of the mayor of Daga, tortured finally to death. She came at the end of Dec. 1992 to Japan for some days and returning to Bhutan more than two third of her students were already in the refugee camps in Nepal. For one day she could go to Nepal to see her former students in a terrible state, who looked like different people. For example, one 14-year-old boy had been hit by police so strong on the head that he lost his capacity to remember all things he is learning each day at school. Coming back from Japan to Bhutan, her house has been turned into a prison and her kitchen into a torture room with sharp stones, people had to roll upon. Therefore she decided to leave this country and came to Japan (Kyoto).

With her and a member of A.I. Nara group, Mitsu Evang, we founded AHURA JAPAN on July 7th 1993, the same day, when Tek Nath Rizal founded 1989 "Peoples Forum for Human Rights" (PFHRB) in exile in Nepal.

The three founders of AHURA JAPAN decided to use the naming AHURA, because of the coordination concerning the planned cooperation with AHURA Bhutan, their independent stance and true dedication to assist the refugees. This cooperation evolved afterwards in the fields of information, preparing the screening of scholarship candidates and managing the scholarships, assisting AHURA Bhutan's members and Japanese researchers and since 1996 financial assistance from AHURA JAPAN for administration cost of AHURA Bhutan.

C. AHURA JAPAN's activities: Advocacy 1993~

1. Appeal card (produced by AHURA JAPAN) for the release of Tek Nath Rizal addressed to His Majesty King Jigme Sangye Wangchuck.

Appeal cards (produced by Amnesty) urging for a general solution of the refugee issue were sent to UN Secretary General Dr. Boutros Boutros Ghali, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck of Bhutan, Home Minister Lyonpo Dago Tshering, Prime Minister of India Narashima Rao, and Prime Minister of Nepal Girija Prasad Koirala, Bhutan's representative in Geneva, and members of the Human Rights Commission in Geneva. Later on, we thought sending cards also to the King of Nepal, would have had some impact.

2. 1993 July 9, first lecture about Bhutanese refugees in Osaka by the chairperson, arranged by Amnesty International with more than 70 participants and even articles about this lecture had been published in 2 Nepali newspapers.
 - 2.1. Meeting Austrian ambassador to Bhutan, Georg Hennig, twice in Vienna asking to push the promotion of democracy in Bhutan during meetings with Bhutanese politicians.
3. AHURA JAPAN's donations:
 - 3.1. 100.000 Yen for buying a video camera to continue their plan for documentation, because AHURA Bhutan has been very interested in documentation of all aspects of the refugee issue and therefore could that year finish a book, with financial assistance from OXFAM for the UN Conference in Vienna 1993.
 - 3.2. 100.000 yen for assisting more than 120 refugees (1993-94) to travel with night bus to Kathmandu for special treatment of victims of torture and rape at Centre for Victims of Torture CVICT (Dr. Bhogendra Sharma). Only since 1995 the treatment of these victims was possible staying in the camps.

Visits of the old centre of CVICT by the chairperson in 1995 and the new one in 2000 (with a refugee study group from Japan). That time receiving an article about the impact of torture among Bhutanese refugees from different faith, written by Dr. Bhogendra Sharma et al. ("Impact of Torture on Refugees Displaced Within the Developing World", JAMA, August 5, 1998- Vol.280. No.5, pp.443-448).
4. March 1994: Inviting Ratan Gazmere to Japan to deliver speeches in Kyoto, Nara, Osaka, Kobe and Tokyo (met also Prof. Kinehide Mushakoji at IMADR). Despite newspaper articles in Mainichi, Asahi, Kyoto, Nara, Kanagawa, THE JAPAN TIMES, etc., nearly no resonance in society.
5. 1994 in Oct, 46 refugee children has been requested by AHURA JAPAN to draw each 2 pictures, one about the life in Bhutan, the other about life in the refugee camps, together with comments (sometime written by adults) and have sent them to Japan.
6. 1995 July 1st, AHURA JAPAN together with NEDO JAPAN (Manoj Shrestha) and Kansai International Culture Exchange Network (Kataoka/Ringhofer) gave a Theater Program by the Royal Nepal Academy "Encounter with Nepal's culture and ethnic groups" (ネパール文化と民族との出会い) in Kashiwara-city (Nara prefecture). Performing 10 dances of different ethnic groups and given a short speech about the

refugee issue by the chairperson.

7. 1995 October 10th: Sent 2 letters (English and Japanese) to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata to know her plans to solve the refugee crisis and expressing the fear of the refugees, the assistance would stop after this year.

AHURA JAPAN received no answer.

8. Camp Sadako: meeting with the Japanese members who have stayed for one month in the camps, at an exhibition in Tokyo in Ginza (Sony Building). Their experiences have been documented in a book published 1997 by Z-kai, a famous company for cram schools in all over Japan. AHURA JAPAN had been asked for pictures drawn by refugee children, of which 2 has been chosen, one for the book cover.

But in this book had been no mentions like “courtesy by AHURA JAPAN”. The Z-kai explanation for that reason was that UNHCR JAPAN has this principle to do so. But later I had asked 2 chief secretaries of UNHCR JAPAN and nobody knew about this order.

9. PP21 conference in Kathmandu 1996:

Meeting Rongthong Kunley Dorji at a hotel in Kathmandu during PP21 conference, also PFHRB S.K.Pradhan, R.B.Basnet (BNDP), R.K.Budathoki (BPP) and other high ranking former Bhutanese officials and NGO representatives (HUROB, SAFAR, etc.).

From R.K.Dorji I received copies of small booklets published by Druk National Congress (DNC) in 1994, “The Silent Suffering in Bhutan” and 1996 (second edition), which convinced me that the issue of the refugees was essentially not an ethnic one, but one of human rights and democracy.

The author of this article had been very impressed by the aura of R.K.D. and had a lot of hope after the reunification of the different refugee groups through the United Front for Democracy (UFD).

After the PP21 conference I invited 6 participants from Switzerland, Japan, Sweden and Vietnam to visit the Peace Marchers (Appeal Movement Coordinating Council or AMCC) at Mechi bridge, I gave a speech, donation and have been interviewed on the bridge by an Indian newspaper published next day.

In the night visiting the refugees at Panchanadi with Nagen Gazmere. With him I traveled to Kalimpong for a visit of the first batch of AHURA JAPAN’s scholarship

students. One female student lived in the residence of one (former) ministry of education official, responsible for students coming to India, who gave us interesting information.

D. Ethnic cleansing issue

Some researchers and writers, Tek Nath Rizal included, are speaking about ethnic cleansing, a term I cannot agree with in the case of Bhutanese refugees. If it would have been an ethnic cleansing all the Nepali-Bhutanese should have been expelled, but it is quite evident that most of the refugees have been rich farmers or/and *Mandals*, suspected of having given donations or cooperating with the democratic movement. Without any proof many wealthy farmers have been expelled who had no interest in politics, but have been targeted as pro democratic activists or supporters. Not only people having participated in the 1990's autumn demonstrations or have been suspected to have done so, have been targeted, but also everybody in a position which could have been leaning towards a pro democratic attitude. (information from many refugees, during stays 1993-2014 in Nepal and Australia).

A further proof of not being an ethnic cleansing or ethnic issue is the fact that between 5~10% of refugees have been Ngalongs or Sharchops.

Some Ngalong heads of villages (*Mandals*) have been asked to half their population within the first year and then the next year again that half by a royal decree. Therefore many of them could not do so and fled also to Nepal, where in the first 2 years the refugee camps had also some Ngalong population, but because of their ethnic background, life was somehow inconvenient for them and they left the camps.

E. AHURA JAPAN's assistance in the educational field

1. AHURA JAPAN scholarships: 1994~2004 (5 batches) to 76 students for class 11 and 12 at schools in India (mostly mission schools in Kalimpong).

Reasons for this scholarship system has been the fact, that UNHCR has not given much attention for this kind of scholarship, therefore it would be a disadvantage for the refugees returning to Bhutan without a remarkable percentage of higher qualified people.

Second reason was the necessity to have refugees with good education, because they

need them to challenge their deprived status and to solve the issue of statelessness. The author of this article has thought since many years, after studying the issue of the Korean minority in Japan, the Slovenian minority in Austria and ethnic minorities in others places, about the hypothesis, that you need at least 5% of the community with an education level of high school or above to generate from this 5% enough people willing to donate their activities (or life) for a solution of their deprived status.

Screening and managing of the scholarships:

Many problems concerning the screening (also counter check with UNHCR) especially the gender, region and caste balance, which resulted in various actions by discontent refugees. The caste issue was also a problem among the refugee leaders and is also seen in some third countries resettled communities.

In 2000 just during the interview with candidates for the 5th batch of scholarship students, NUCRA= (Government of Nepal National Unit for Coordination of Refugee Affairs) together with CARITAS and 7 camp secretaries had decided to let no refugee student go for India to study cl.11 and 12, forgetting AHURA JAPAN's scholarship system. My strong request towards father Amalraj focused on the right of students to choose the place of education and finally our students could go to India for their studies.

Many recipients became teachers in Nepal's public and private schools and also in the refugee schools, which should have been their first choice. 1 student finishing class 12 had best results among more than 3.000 students in Darjeeling district. Also Jamuna Karki (3rd batch) became later the first female principal in refugees camp schools at Tri Ratna Secondary School in Beldangi II.

More than 120 camp school teachers received incentives for distant education at universities in Nepal and India.

Also, scholarships to some children of AHURA Bhutan's officers and for officers Computer training had been provided.

Donations of AHURA JAPAN for education etc.

From 1994-2009 donation to CARITAS: all kind of stationary, books, equipment for physical and chemistry classes, music instruments (pianicas, flutes, guitars, 1 saxophone), microscopes, sport goods (soccer balls, badminton rackets) 1 telescope,

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together weight more than 1 ton.

Direct donations of books sometime to schools, stationary to NFE (Non Formal Education) and classes for children with special needs and many toys to Children Play Centers. CARITAS stated 1997 in their Annual Report for Beldangi II Extension on p.5 “the bulk of donation came from AHURA JAPAN”.

Also donations for buying medicine, books, bicycle, etc. for refugees in urgent need.

2003, August, Workshop in Beldangi camp by the chairperson of AHURA JAPAN for about 30 refugee leaders and teachers with the title “Developing country versus so called developed country”.

F. Contacts with Tek Nath Rizal: often called the Mandela of Bhutan

1st contact January 2000, calling him by phone for about 12 minutes, when he was still in a hotel in Thimphu, trying to strengthen democracy from inside Bhutan.

AHURA JAPAN sending May 2000 postcards to the King of Bhutan thanking for the release of T. N. Rizal and urging also to release Prem Bahadur Gurung, D. K. Rai and Phauda Singh Rai.

But even some years before, March 1993, I could meet with his wife Kausila Rizal at the house in Birtamod where he had been kidnapped in 1990 together with Sushil Phokrel and Jogen Gazmere. As a result of the visit one son of T. N. Rizal, Kamal Rizal, got later a scholarship from AHURA JAPAN in Kalimpong for cl.11 and 12. He needed of course a bodyguard, because he was sitting in the same class with children from Bhutanese politicians and military personal.

The first personal meeting with Tek Nath Rizal was in December 2003 in his house in Kathmandu. The second time has been one day after the 2008 fire at Goldhap camp, both of us planning to visit the devastated camp.

G. 1996~97 Democracy movement by Nyingma monks in Bhutan

During the suppression of this movement one monk have been killed and of the arrested ones many are still in prison. About 1.000 monks and disciples had been expelled and many temples closed. (Also Meeting with Pema Gyalpo in Tokyo for further information about the situation in Bhutan).

AHURA JAPAN tried in vain to convince monks at famous Buddhist temples in Nara to intervene for these arrested monks at the Government of Bhutan. These expelled monks founded Shri Lhomon Ngagyur Nyingma Association asking for assistance. The chairperson met these monks and also people cooperating with them like Narad Adhikari and Thinley Penjore, Chief Convenor of National Front for Democracy (NFD-Bhutan), later Acting Chairman of UFD (1997) and established DRUK-YUL PEOPLES DEMOCRATIC PARTY (DMT, 1998). From T. Penjore I got first time information about the killings of Shabdrungs Reincarnations in 1931, 1953 and 2003.

Shabdrung is the reincarnation of the theocratic ruler of Bhutan.

H. Fearing a renewal of Theocracy?

This repeated killings of the former theocratic ruler in Bhutan (till 1907) and the keeping in house arrest of the little boy who had been chosen as the next incarnation in 2003 is an interesting phenomenon which shows the latent fear of the king to be overthrown by the religious leader. It seems that even more than 100 years of monarchy could not erase the latent fear facing the still strong religious feelings of the Buddhist population. Despite the interdiction to make a pilgrimage to India to see the Shabdrung many Bhutanese went there to show him their respect. This deep-rooted religious habit had not changed for nearly 100 years and therefore the king has lured the boy together with his parents from their exile back to Bhutan under the pretext to check if he is really the right incarnation. This action is an affront towards the Tibetan Buddhist sect believers of the Drukpa Kagyupa sect, the same as the king belongs.

I. AHURA JAPAN's Refugee study tours 1999 and 2000: Visiting Bhutanese and Tibetan refugee camps (Participants had been each time 12 Japanese, 8 students, 4 working people).

Visit of Tibetan refugee camps in Kathmandu and in Pokhara (Shree Manjushree Primary School Paljorling Tibetan Camp and Mt. Kailash Camp) giving stationery and books donations. 1998 already given donation of a TV with video equipment by AHURA JAPAN to Manjushree school.

Visit of 3 Bhutanese refugee camps each time. 1999 also Prof. Katsuya Kodama (Mie University) participated in the visit of Bhutanese refugee camps. Visit of schools, CPCs

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(Children play centers), CARITAS (donation).

During the 2000 visit, the deputy director of the (Nepal) Refugee Coordination Unit (RCU) Mr. Mandal tried to arrest us, because having taken photos in the camps. But the true reason has been another one: One of his close relatives could not get AHURA JAPAN's scholarship because of low marks. With the help of his secretary, a former CARITAS worker we could avoid arrest.

2002: Participation of AHURA JAPAN with 12 pictures drawn by Bhutanese refugee children at the 25th Exhibition of children pictures "International Exchange of Children's Art" by The PASS (Private Art School Society) at Kyoto City Art Museum, 23rd and 24th March 2002.

J. 2003: 3 times in Nepal and inviting Ratan Gazmere and Gauri Giri to Japan

1. In February visiting Khudunabari camp, speaking to about 120 refugees on hunger strike, because of the still pending publication of the outcome of the 2001 verification.
2. In the first week of May visit of 6 camps with Prof. Yukio Irie (Article by Y. Irie, "NGO と公共性の問題の一 辞令 - ネパールのブータン難民キャンプを訪問して-", 臨床と対話 ("One example of the problem between NGO's and publicity - visit of Bhutanese refugee camps in Nepal NGO Clinical Dialogues - " in "Dialogues - Osaka University", The 21st Century COE Program Interface Humanities Research Activities 2002-2003, Dec. 2003, pp.52-59).
3. Visit of the camps with 2 members of AHURA JAPAN, Tanaka Ai (doctoral student of Prof. T. Kodama) and Makiko Fujiwara, giving also donations to CARITAS. Meeting with Tek Nath Rizal in Kathmandu.
4. June 2003: Second invitation of Ratan Gazmere by AHURA JAPAN June 18th to July 2nd, together with his wife Gauri Giri. She spoke at DAWN Center Osaka about her work for deprived women in Kathmandu, Terres des Hommes and Chhimeki Nepal, especially about the health and nutritious issues of malnourished children and their mothers and have shown a video documentation "Down by the River" and also about the same topic at Osaka Sangyo University, where Ratan Gazmere gave a lecture about the history, present situation and future of Bhutanese refugees, translated into Japanese by Prof. Y. Irie in the same publication of Osaka University, mentioned

above (2), “ブータン難民の過去・現在・未来” (“Bhutanese refugees history, present and future”, pp.60-66).

Ratan Gazmere gave again lectures in Osaka, Kyoto, Nara and Tokyo. Some articles appeared in Asahi, Mainichi and Kyoto newspapers.

K. Cooperation with Prof. Katsuya Kodama:

2004: With financial backing of Prof. T. Kodama (Mie University) we could publish a booklet (27 pages) about the plight of Bhutanese refugees. The content shows the history of the Bhutanese refugees' issue, the life in the camps, documented with many photos, the results of the verification in Khudunabari camp and short history of AHURA Bhutan and AHURA JAPAN.

Ai Tanaka and the author of this article has been responsible for the content of this booklet called “見捨てられた難民・ブータン難民の苦悩と希望” (“Forgotten Refugees-Bhutanese Refugees Plight and Hope”), 三重県人権問題研究所・平和研究部会 (Mie Prefecture, Human Rights Research Institute-Peace Research Section) March 2004.

2005: AHURA JAPAN could produce a DVD (26 min.) again with the backing of Prof. T. Kodama called “見捨てられた難民 - ブータン難民 (Forgotten Refugees - Bhutanese Refugees) showing the life in the camps, interviews with Ratan Gazmere and AHURA Bhutan's members, AHURA JAPAN's activities in Japan and the Dec. 2003 interview with Tek Nath Rizal and an appeal by him asking for help from Japan. Also the author has been invited by Prof. Kodama twice to speak about the refugee issue at symposiums in Tsu-city, Mie prefecture.

L. Activities from 2004~

1. 2004, February, Press meeting of AHURA Bhutan together with AHURA JAPAN about the outcome of the verification of Khudanabari camp (Kathmandu).
2. Manfred Ringhofer (2004, July 6th), Bhutan Refugees-Forgotten Refugees. Presentation at IPRA (=International Peace Research Association) Conference, Sopron, Hungary.
3. 2007: Received a DVD produced by Jogen Gazmere the same year, explaining 100 years of Bhutan's history, called “Politics of Bhutan”. Criticizing the politics of the Government of Bhutan against the refugees, for example the outcome of the refugees

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verification process, in which about 130 children, born in the camps, had been classified as criminals. The photo of one girl is on the cover page.

4. Lectures by AHURA JAPAN members at different locations in Osaka, Kyoto, Nara, Tokyo, Kobe and Sapporo.
5. Fund Raising Bazaars in Nara, Osaka (ONE WORLD FESTIVAL, participated 19 times between 1995 and 2016) and Tokyo.

M. Role of UNHCR

1. 1994: AHURA Bhutan on behalf of AHURA JAPAN asked UNHCR NEPAL for managing the scholarships for the first batch of 5 students. The condition had been 10% of the scholarships amount as handling fee, which AHURA JAPAN denied and asked AHURA Bhutan to do it.
2. In the second half of the 90s had been a field director in Damak without having visited the camps for half a year, a fact which he even told the Bhutanese camp secretaries.
3. 2008: during the evening of the fire at Goldhap camp, one lady from UNHCR and me tried in vain to convince the UNHCR representative in Damak to go to the camps that evening. He told us he would go the next day.
4. The inactivity by the UNHCR representative in Kathmandu regarding the multiple suggestions of rape incidents against the refugee women.
5. The handling of the food mafia and the related (?) expulsion of two INGO's from the camps.
6. The misreading of Bhutanese policy by Sadako Ogata after her visit to Bhutan.
7. UN had never succeeded to convene an international conference with representatives from Bhutan, Nepal and the refugees beside those from UNHCR.
8. Not having pressured Bhutan's government to let the refugees return in a dignified way and instead proposed the third country solution before trying earnestly to repatriate the refugees.
9. The powerlessness of UNHCR's Human rights organizations (subcommittees) in Geneva to put pressure on Bhutan. Even one representative, Louis Joinet, even mentioned the rightfulness of the arrest of Tek Nath Rizal by the Government of Bhutan.
10. The handling of the settlement to third countries and the cooperation with IOM.
11. The inadequate research concerning the origin of GNH and the failure to recognize

the connection between the Bhutanese refugee issue and the GNH propaganda since 1998. This peaked in the resolution by the General meeting of UNO, that everybody has the human right of happiness, after the model of Bhutan (March 2012).

N. Role of Japanese media covering Bhutanese refugees

1. Some TV stations brought in the beginning of the 90s short news of the refugees coming out of Bhutan with not correct, misleading commentaries 1994: NHK Nara interviewed the chairperson during an AHURA JAPAN bazaar in Nara, but it was severely censured by NHK Osaka during the news program.

Kyushu Yomiuri television asked me once to introduce a young Bhutanese refugee youth for one Sunday morning program, but finally finished with no answer to my proposal.

2. Newspapers, journals

1990, after the demonstrations in southern Bhutan, one short article about the demonstrations by Kyodo News Japan had the consequences that journalists of this company could not get visa for Bhutan during some years.

Newspaper articles critical of Bhutan's policy, until recently, had been very rare, some at the beginning of the 90s, but most of them only when Ratan Gazmere came to Japan or in the beginning of AHURA JAPAN's activities.

2011: One journalist from Yomiuri Newspaper head office in Tokyo (Ginza) who had visited the camps in Nepal asked me for more information than those in the home page. I sent him all my articles with other information concerning GNH, but after that again silence.

2014: After being frustrated by the Japanese media never ending stories about the great ideas of GNH, I sent my articles about the refugees and the connection with GNH together about information about the national census of 2005 and 2010 to Asahi Newspaper Headquarter in Tokyo (Ginza), but after some weeks I have been told that the journalist in charge has no interest in it.

Why is the media in Japan not interested? We have to look at some, in Japanese society often mentioned relations between Japan and Bhutan.

Journal FRIDAY (leftist): published Sept. 1994 an article by one University Professor, titled "Bhutan, the only country worldwide where everybody is wearing the same ethnic

clothes”, without analyzing the background of this phenomenon. The editors had been shocked when I complained on phone and published my correction in the next issue.

2011: Nov. 24: During the visit of King Jigme Gesar Wangchuck in Japan some media started to doubt the Shangrila image (Yomiuri Shinbun mentioned above) and a very “brave” act was the radio interview for 20 minutes done by Mainichi Radio Broadcasting Osaka, where I could speak about the refugee tragedy, the relationship between the refugee issue and the presenting of GNH and also mention the killings of the incarnations of the Shabdrung. Two different people unknown to me had afterwards put this program on YouTube, where it had more than 8.000 accesses all together in the first 6 months.

2009 the chairperson of AHURA JAPAN has been interviewed during his stay in Nepal by Indra Adhikari, APFA NEWS.COM, (posted 6. Nov.) about the relations between Japan and Bhutan, especially the reasons why the Japanese media is not really interested to tell the truth about the refugee issue. Among many questions had been also some about the cause of the refugee problem, the GNH and the third country resettlement.

O. My publications about the history and present situation of the Bhutanese refugees

1. リングホーフアー・マンフレッド, 「ブータン難民の歴史と現状」, 京都大学ヒマラヤ研究会発行『ヒマラヤ学誌』第7号, 2000年6月, pp.115-126 (Manfred Ringhofer, (June 2000). History and present situation of Bhutanese refugees. Kyoto University Himalaya Gakushi, 7, pp.115-126).

This article is emphasizing the multiethnic and multicultural society of Bhutan, the human rights violating national census of 1988 (“nonsensus”) without publishing the ethnic distribution in detail, the false statement of Bhutanese Government concerning the population of Bhutan, which has shown also a 1 million people deduction, for the population of 1994 within 2 years.

Detailing the fact that 98% of the refugees have some documentation to prove their citizenship (AHURA Bhutan’s research). Another point I stressed is the fact that also people from other ethnic groups, not belonging to Nepali-Bhutanese (Lhotsampas) had fled the country, which worldwide nearly nobody had noticed. Therefore for

many years this Bhutanese refugees issue has been treated like an ethnic issue and not as an issue of democracy and human rights. Also the activities of DNC, UFD and Nyingma monks are mentioned.

After a brief history of establishing the refugee camps the article concentrates on the Establishing an education system beginning in Maidhar camp. Building of schools, establishing of a syllabus and the mandate of CARITAS NEPAL for the education of the refugees. The publication of textbooks, with international mindset and based on a broad view of human rights. Education for the special need children and NFE education is included. Also the qualification of teachers and scholarship issues (CARITAS, DAFI, BRAVVE and AHURA JAPAN) are discussed.

2. リングホーファー・マンフレッド, 「ブータン難民の発生の背景」, 北海道社会学会編『現代社会学研究』, 第14巻, 2001年6月, pp.193-202 (Manfred Ringhofer, (2001, June). Bhutanese Refugees development and circumstances. Hokkaido Research Sociology Present Sociological Research 14, pp.193-202).

This article shows Ratan Gazmere's (former teacher at National Institute of Education, Samchi) fate and the founding of AHURA Bhutan in November 1992 in Nepal and also the circumstances of AHURA JAPAN's founding. After a survey of the ethnic groups in Bhutan it focuses on Bhutanese politics in the 80ies, the Citizenship Law of 1985, the National census of 1988 and the Assimilation policy. It analyzes the Government of Bhutan's fear of one Greater Nepal, citing the fate of Sikkim, as an "excuse" for its assault on the Nepali Bhutanese. Also the role of ULFA and BLTF in this situation is discussed. The activities and fate of Tek Nath Rizal and Rongthong Kunley Dorj, and Nyingma monks. Also the role of Japanese ODA activities (JICA) in Bhutan is shown.

The author thinks, like many other people, that the higher educational level of the Nepali Bhutanese population, having more access to information and interest in democracy and human rights had been also factors behind the policy towards the "Lotshampas".

The suppression of the democratic movement during the demonstrations in autumn 1990 and the aftermath is mentioned. The ending stated the sorrow of the author concerning two issues, one was that the pace of the first 4 weeks of the already started verification in Khudunabari which would have required more than 5 years to

finish and the second, the oppression of the Christian minority has been brought up by Jesuit Refugee Service Dispatches.

3. Manfred Ringhofer, (2002, March). Bhutanese Refugees History and Present Situation with Emphasize on Education. Department of Lifelong Education and Libraries, Graduate School of Education, Kyoto University, pp.43-72.

This article analyzes the history of immigration from Nepal to Bhutan, the problematic figure of the population, the census of 1988, Triglam Namzha policy, the democratic movement and the methods how the people had been afterwards expelled, compiled by AHURA Bhutan. Also the role of the King during this expulsion is discussed following the MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS "The Southern Bhutan Problem - Threat to a Nation's Survival" 1993, Thimphu.

The part of the educational system in the refugee camps goes more in detail than in 2000 and also gives a comparison of textbooks used in Bhutan with those in the camps. (History textbook for class 6 and Environmental studies Textbook for class 2). It contains also the search for a political solution, bilateral talks, AMCC and BRRRC activities, verification and HABITAT' findings. It mentions also the strengthening of the assimilation policies after the expulsion, seen also in the renaming of many districts, blocks and villages. Also statistics about the students in the refugee schools January 2002.

4. リングホーファー・マンフレッド, 「ブータン難民の生活環境」, 文化環境学のスペクトル, 三修社, 2004年3月, 東京, pp.213-246 (Manfred Ringhofer, (2004, March). Living conditions of Bhutanese Refugees. Specter of Cultural Environmental Studies, Sanshusha, Tokyo, pp.213-246.

After a brief history of Bhutanese refugees the camps management system is analyzed in detail and then the issues of house structures, toilets, streets, medical care, water supply, food distribution (gardening included), daily necessities, postal service. Children's Forum, Refugee Women Forum (RWF), Rape and torture victims' treatment (CVICT) and educational issues.

5. リングホーファー・マンフレッド, (2005, March). ブータン難民の帰国問題－平和的解決が可能か?－, 平和学論集III, 大阪産業大学産業研究所, p.135～p.156. (Manfred Ringhofer (2005, March). Repatriation of Bhutanese refugees - is there a peaceful

solution possible? -).

First challenging the myth of “ethnic issue”, than analyzing the bilateral talks between Nepal and Bhutan, the outcome of the verification team, the Peace Marches and European Parliament decision 1996, the digital Base of 51% of refugees done by AHURA Bhutan 2001, the resettlement issue (HABITAT International, 2001) and the fact that already 2003, 70% of former land of refugees given to other ethnic groups, the problems arising during the verification process and the lie in Kuensel Online 2004, Dec. 22, that Bhutanese refugees had set fire from outside on the building where Dr. Sonam Tenzin and his members had explained “new” conditions of returning to Bhutan. Also the infiltration of Maoists in the camps is discussed as the Sept. 2003 first suggestion by the than UNHCR head Rudd Lubbers to start with third country migration. The passive role of UNHCR is also mentioned.

6. リングホーファー・マンフレッド (2007年3月)ブータン難民キャンプ使用の教科書とブータン国内使用の教科書比較, 『ネパールにおけるマージナルプのグループ教育様式の政治人類学的研究』京都大学大学院教育学研究科, pp.51-56.

Manfred Ringhofer (2007 March) Comparison of textbooks used in the Bhutanese refugee camps and those inside Bhutan. “Educational systems of marginal groups in Nepal seen from a political ethnographic point of view”, Kyoto University, Faculty of Education Graduate Studies, pp.51-56.

Analyzing History, English and environmental studies textbooks and Teacher Manuals from Bhutan and Nepal camp books through 8 topics with the aim of measuring the desire of the refugees to repatriate, to find the basic differences between the books used, the number of international points of view, the interpretation of the assimilation policy and the beginning of the refugees’ exodus. During research I heard that the Government of Bhutan had ordered Mandela Book Point publishers to stop the publication of a book because one part of the history of the Buddhist line tradition of Bhutan, with which it does not agree. Among the findings was not only the strengthening of the assimilation policy in textbooks and introducing more Dzongka language classes, but also the contradiction of an assimilation policy, speaking about one country, one people one language and one religion and on the same page writing “respect all religions and feel compassion for all peoples, ... respect differences”.

Assistance for Bhutanese refugees in Nepal through AHURA JAPAN (Manfred RINGHOFER)

7. リングホーファー・マンフレッド (2010年3月)「ブータン難民の歴史・現状・未来」『平和学論集IV』, 大阪産業大学産業研究所, pp.41-62.

Manfred Ringhofer (2010, March) History, Presence and Future of Bhutanese Refugees. “Peace Research Repository”, Osaka Sangyo University Sangyo Research Institute, pp.41-62.

This article contains recent developments in the educational field, but the focus is on UNHCR’s role concerning the managing of the camps, the activities concerning a solution. Sato Ogata’s misinterpreting role, etc. Also the verification process and the aftermath, including Dr. Sonam Tenzing’s role in starting a new system of ID-cards, which invalidated those of the refugees. The contradicting views by refugees (organizations) concerning the settlement in third countries and the tragic outcome of these differences. The situation at the beginning of the third countries resettlement, the role of IOM and finally the situation of the newly settled refugees in USA and Australia, housing, job, cultural activities, networking, etc.

P. Relations between Bhutanese refugee issue and GNH

1. Manfred Ringhofer (2011, Oct. 15th), Bhutan Gross National Happiness (GNH) and Bhutanese Refugees, Power point presentation, APPRA (=Asia Pacific Peace Research Association) Conference Kyoto.
2. Manfred Ringhofer (2012, June 23th), Japan Peace Research Association, Autumn Meeting, Okinawa University.
3. Manfred Ringhofer (2012, Oct. 26th), Relations between Bhutanese Refugees and Gross National Happiness (GNH) - Unhappy Bhutanese Nationals -. IPRA Conference Mie.
4. Manfred Ringhofer (2013, Nov. 22th), Relations between Bhutanese Refugees and Gross National Happiness (GNH) - Unhappy Bhutanese Nationals inside Bhutan and worldwide. NZASIA 2013 Conference, Auckland University.

About the same topics 5 other presentation at smaller research groups or NGO’s.

Above mentioned power point presentations emphasized the point of presenting the cause of GNH worldwide in 1998 by the former foreign minister Lyonpo Jigmi Thinley, after being criticized about the refugee issues and oppression of democracy movements in Bhutan. (For example during the fiftieth session of the Sub-Commission

on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, 14 August 1998) Criticizing also the UN General Assembly of voting for a resolution concerning the human right for happiness, without reading the articles about GNH in the government's home page. There they would have found the fact, that the former king who is told to have had 1972 the idea of GNH, in explaining the preserving of culture, language and religion means only his own cultural group of Ngalongs and exclude all other ethnic groups. In other words, this "philosophy" is a kind of assimilation policy from the beginning. There are of course other contradictions which nobody (?) in the UN realized it. July 2011, the UN General Assembly placed in Resolution 65/309 "happiness" on the global agenda.

June 2012, the Government of Bhutan published the results of the 2010 National Census concerning the research about happiness. The result of this 213 pages report is the stunning 59.1% of not happy Bhutanese, who had in more than 66% of questions stated their unhappiness.

But comparing with the conduct and questions during the 2005 National Census, we have also to admit the fact of progressing democracy after 2010, but which otherwise has seen a worsening in controlling the media and is still based on ruling the country with a Buddhist style of governing. But the beginning in 2012 of the worldwide WORLD HAPPINESS REPORT shows also the reality that for example in the 2015 report Bhutan is just in the middle of 158 countries at place 79.

- Q.** Unpublished research about the role of education for refugees asking, 72 refugees from age of 16 to 70s. The outcome was interesting, because all people mentioned not only the importance of education, but also the equal right of girls to receive the same education like boys. This result shows the effect of the human rights education within the camps, also one important activity of AHURA Bhutan.
- R.** Symposium with research group of students of famous private universities in Kansai area "idcp 2013, March 15" together with two members of GNH Research Institute (Tokyo).

S. Publications of books in Japanese language:

In Japan many books about GNH are published, but only one criticizing GNH and Bhutanese policy. This book is written by Kaoru Nemoto, who worked 14 years at UNHCR, published Sept. 2012, 根本かおる『ブータン「幸福な国」の不都合な真実』, Tokyo, (Bhutan [Happy Country] Inconvenient Truth).

T. Recent activities of AHURA JAPAN

1. 2014.11.26 at UNHCR Refugee Film Festival in Kobe (Kansei Gakuin University) as commentator of the documentary by D. Bramante and M. Weinfurter “The Refugees of Shangri-La” (USA) and also stating most of the important points concerning the policy towards the refugees and the connection with GNH. Also mentioning the differences concerning integration of Bhutanese refugees in USA and Australia.
2. Since 2013, Nov. starting to research the integration of (former) Bhutanese refugees in Australia, visiting Adelaide (2013-2015) and Melbourne (2014-2015), Sydney (2015), finding some differences between the living conditions in USA and Australia.

Conclusion

Working for refugees in Japan is not easy, neither for refugees inside nor for those in other countries. There are quite a lot of reasons for it, for example the disinterest of the media, especially if it is a low figure and a not wellknown minority. Also the language barrier is a hindrance for many journalists. Therefore most Japanese never hear anything about many refugee issues, based on their own disinterest and using only Japanese language media information. In addition it is clear that the human rights education in schools is not as good as it should be, if we look at past and actual presentation.

Concerning the case of Bhutanese refugees it is even more difficult to find people interested in this issue. Because of the near silence situation of the media, people only believe in the myth of the last Shangrila and do not try to further analyze the situation in Bhutan. During these 25 years even many NGO volunteers had been shocked to hear my presentation about the history of the Bhutanese refugees. This absence of non reflection is still present in society and media, only the newspapers in English language make a difference.

From an international point of view the attitude of most media institutions is a shame for Japan.

Examining the activities of AHURA JAPAN we can say it has had a good impact concerning advocacy in Japan, and in recent times more and more people are interested to learn what has happened or is still happening in Bhutan.

But the activities had a bigger impact regarding the education and life of many refugees. All kind of donations and scholarships for students and incentives for teacher's distant education. The donation of educational material is still going on, but advocacy work in Japan is the main activity.

The Bhutanese refugee issue is still unresolved in many ways, if we look at the camps, where still nearly 10.000 refugees would like to return to Bhutan, or looking at USA settlement, the suicide rate of Bhutanese refugees is the highest of all refugees and immigrants in the USA. But otherwise the worldwide trend to preserve their culture is very positive. The need of an international conference is still there, for a general solution, but also for the request of compensation from the government of Bhutan, for their lost property by some Bhutanese refugees in different countries.