Nestled in the Himalayas between the two giant and populous countries in the world, China and India, Bhutan remained secluded for centuries. The monarchy was instituted in Bhutan in the first decade of the twentieth century, at a time when this institution was on decline elsewhere and republican ideas were on the rise. Today Bhutan is the only surviving monarchy in South Asia and the only Mahayana Buddhist kingdom in the world. In 2008, Bhutan took the first steps towards becoming a democracy with the introduction of a constitutional monarchy.

This study aims to look at royal coronations in Bhutan looking upon them as windows to explore the historical transformation which Bhutan experienced during the twentieth century. Though monarchy was prevalent in almost all regions of the world in the past, now it is abolished and replaced by other forms of government in many countries. However, some countries have monarchy still surviving. This study will explore some factors which have helped in the survival of this institution in Bhutan until now. In what ways coronations have been used by the successive kings of the Wangchuck dynasty to build their political legitimacy and help in the transformation of Bhutanese society? It will focus on the symbolic meaning and significance of coronations, looking upon them as political ritual that served to legitimate and also to preserve monarchical rule in Bhutan. It will further explore the Bhutanese concept of kingship and the continuity and change in the coronation ritual in particular and Bhutanese society in general.

This study will cover the period from the establishment of the monarchy in 1907 to the coronation of the fifth and present king in 2008. Bhutan witnessed the coronation of five kings within a century. The study hopes to provide an understanding of the rise of monarchy and its larger impact upon historical change and continuity in Bhutan.

**Abstract**

Nestled in the Himalayas between the two giant and populous countries in the world, China and India, Bhutan remained secluded for centuries. The monarchy was instituted in Bhutan in the first decade of the twentieth century, at a time when this institution was on decline elsewhere and republican ideas were on the rise. Today Bhutan is the only surviving monarchy in South Asia and the only Mahayana Buddhist kingdom in the world. In 2008, Bhutan took the first steps towards becoming a democracy with the introduction of a constitutional monarchy.

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**About the Speaker**

Ngawang Drakpa is a M.A. student. He teaches History in a high school in Bhutan from where he had taken leave to pursue a Masters Programme at the South Asian Studies Programme, National University of Singapore.