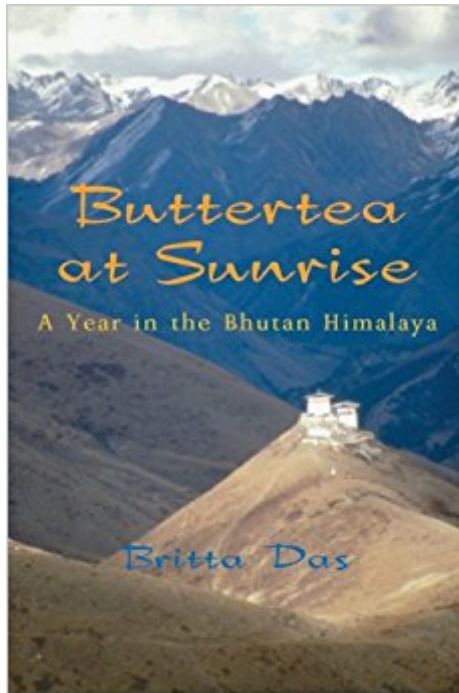




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# Buttertea At Sunrise: A Year In The Bhutan Himalaya



## Synopsis

Often seen as a magical paradise at the end of the world, Bhutan is inaccessible to most travellers. Set against the dramatic scenery of the Himalaya, this beguiling memoir recalls hardships and happiness in a land almost untouched by the West. When Britta Das goes to work as a physiotherapist in a remote village hospital, her good intentions are put to the test amid monsoons, fleas, and startling conditions. But as she visits homes in the mountains and learns the mysteries of Tantric Buddhism, the country captivates her very soul. Gaining insights into the traditions of the mystical kingdom, Britta makes friends, falls in love, and battles illness. Throughout it all, as she writes, she worries about the "destructive nearness of technology" and fears that Bhutan's charm and innocence may soon be lost. Still, Bhutan has endured for centuries, and there is no denying that the country has transformed her life forever.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

... fascinating and so very readable. An American or Canadian high school or college student would likely find the work interesting and valuable for its adventuresome account. (Fritz Blackwell The University of Michigan Press)... a memoir by Brita Das, a youngish Torontonion who was a Volunteer Service Overseas physiotherapist in the tiny country that until recently as all but closed to foreigners but now, also no doubt, grows more open all the time. She tells us a good deal about the country, its culture and customs, and a great deal about herself. So remote is the destination that this is only the second Canadian book about Bhutan. Through the eyes of Britta Das, we gain valuable insight into the realm of Bhutan... compelling reading. (Michael Buckley)

Set against the dramatic scenery of the Himalaya, this beguiling memoir reveals hardships and happiness in a land almost untouched by the West.

'Buttertea at Sunrise' is a wonderful memoir by the author as she spent time in the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan. This is one of many books on the subject, as Bhutan has developed an almost mystical quality which has delighted many visitors who have been fortunate enough to visit. While I do not count myself among those fortunate (yet), I do plan on visiting this wonderful country someday. What stands out to me about Britta Das' book is the realistic portrayals of life in Bhutan. Poverty, poor hygiene, disease, and other ills impact the Bhutanese in a somewhat disproportionate way because of the lack of resources, and the descriptions in this book are vivid (to say the least). In fact, if one were only to read the sections where the author describes these problems, it might persuade others to not visit Bhutan. But taken in the context of the other descriptions in the book, as well as other books about Bhutan, it should not dissuade anyone. The book is short and easy to read. It is intensely personal and has some nice photos as well. I highly recommend this book if you are thinking about going to Bhutan (as I am someday) or are just interested.

First off, let me point out I have found Bhutan an amazing nation, being brave enough to say that being HAPPY was the most important thing. Think of it? Gross National Happiness! I have a few books about the Kingdom, having visited their displays and exhibits last year on the National Mall. One of the reasons I enjoyed this book was how realistic and gritty the author's view point was. She saw the dirty homes, the ill people, not just the natural beauty and the Buddhist lifestyles. Of course, she was there to work along side the people, not just passing through like many others. She found a lot in her journey - love, pain, understanding, enlightenment. She brought something back, not just photos or stories to write about, but maybe a changed soul? She is brave enough to share those experiences. She didn't just tell us about temples and shops, street names and problems with the toilets, like so many other travel books. She told us about her fears, dreams, her romance and her failures. Can't get more real than that!

Since returning from Bhutan, I have devoured a number of books by people who have experienced that country on the cusp of modernity on a much deeper level than is possible for the tourist. Britta Das's very personal description of her months (not quite a year) in the hinterland of a country that is itself a hinterland, is probably the most heartfelt of them all. Having a multi-cultural background of

her own, and previously traveled to the area, Das was probably better prepared to immerse herself into this oh so different Buddhist kingdom than some of the other authors. While her own experience (and physical suffering) is definitely part of the mix, and to some extent front and center, there is no self indulgent whining about the hardships encountered. Instead, there is an incredible sympathy for and openness to the complexities and ambivalences that mark this culture and the deep beauty of the country and a pragmatic desire to make it all work and truly add value through the mission she had set out to accomplish (teach and practice physiotherapy, one person at a time). The narrative is not the most polished, and one does get the sense that English is not the author's native language and the quality of the pictures leave you with the impression that they were taken much longer ago than is actually the case. However, these are minor quibbles that don't detract from the pleasure the books provides.

As someone who has travelled four times to Bhutan and loved every minute, I like this book's description of life in Bhutan as it really is. I could recognise the hospital, as I've visited a few myself. Britta writes about her life during one year as a volunteer in the eastern part of Bhutan, her encounters with the local people, how religion is woven with every part of their life, and with hers as well. Her writing lets you feel her experiences, you can see the mountains if they're not in the clouds, you can feel the rain during the monsoon. Her pictures add much extra value to her words. Britta writes about the Bhutan of 1997, and it is interesting how little has changed in the essence of life there. I recommend this book to all who plan to travel to Bhutan, to see beyond the dazzling tourist sites.

I loved reading about Brita's story about her year in Bhutan. Her memoirs were sincere and I would have dreams about Bhutan after reading each night. A special plus were the photographs that related to her experiences. I also have a desire to visit Bhutan one day (booked my trip for 2015)...but for now this book will keep Bhutan in my heart. This is because Brita's words are so descriptive and insightful that I really felt like I was standing next to her during her year in the Land of the Thunder Dragon! Will keep this book forever!

This is the memoir of a physiotherapist who went to work in a health center in Eastern Bhutan. It is a nice story of her challenges and adjustment. It will be the most interesting to people who have been to Bhutan or plan to go. The author details the hardships of living in a simpler, poorer society and explains cultural practices that she encountered. I especially appreciated her explanation of some

Buddhist beliefs and practices. She writes with humor and true affection for the people, so the memoir is pleasant to read.

Bhutan has been on "the list" for over 30 years and it looks like 2015 is the year I'll finally make it so I've been reading as much as I can about this unique country. This book is like one slice of a huge pie about Bhutan. It is about a small village and gives you an in-depth terrific idea of how the Bhutanese really live. The Love Story that comes with it is very well done also read it my Kindle.

I loved hearing about Britta's experiences! She was very realistic, but also gave me insight into the wonderful country before I visited. Thank you!

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