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Day 26: Eco Hero



Tshering Tobgay. Does this name ring a bell? If you've taken part in Turning Green's Project Green Challenge, it definitely should. Tobgay is the Prime Minister of Bhutan who appeared in a Ted Talk back in 2016 about Bhutan's progress in sustainability.

Born in 1965, he is the oldest of six sons. He received a scholarship from the United Nations which he used to attend the University of Pittsburgh obtaining a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering. From college to becoming the Prime Minister of Bhutan, Tobgay has achieved many accomplishments in his life. For 5 years remained as the leader of the opposition in the 'National Assembly' He was a founding member of the first registered political party of Bhutan, the "People's Democratic Party," of which he has served as President. He also served as a civil servant in the 'Department of Education' and worked for the Technical and Vocational Education Sector there. What inspires me about Tobgay is his method of working from the ground-level up. He is devoted to stopping corruption in the government system, handling youth unemployment, and working towards strengthening the economy and giving communities access to farming equipment. He is also focused on working with other countries on tackling climate change which is crucial in today's climate. All systems of government need to be on the same

page when it comes to the one planet that we all share whose resources we all take advantage of and need for a sustainable life.

In Bhutan's most recent election, the ruling party (that of Tshering Tobgay) was outvoted in the first round of elections. This will no doubt have an impact on where the country is headed next, however, Tobgay will still have a strong presence that he has built and maintained over the last five years of his leadership. What I appreciate is his engaging personality and ability to connect with any generation of people. His blog is followed and promoted by people of all ages so much that they spread and teach others about the ideas he shares with the online world. And not only he the Prime Minister a professional speaker, but he is also a humorous and funny person. He has publicly stated "I think I can take President Obama one on one in basketball. I've got some special moves." What I admire about him is that while being a spokesperson for such dire issues both in his home country of Bhutan and globally, he is able to spread positivity in both political and social forms.

After viewing his Ted Talk and doing research on his more recent activity, I've been reminded of my passion and interest in activism. I always appreciate seeing leaders take the extra step (on top of all of their other responsibilities) of going out into the community and talking with their fellow members to have face-to-face conversations with the people they are affecting. When talking about leadership, there is a difference between checking off your to-do list of duties and achieving goals you've set for yourself in taking that position. What do you want to change? How do you intend to do it? What effects will these have on different members in your community? Tshering Tobgay has committed to his position and more. If we want to see change, we have to elect people who examine all facets of solutions to issues that impact not just one community, but all communities. And we need to reach a state where we look at the well-being and sustainable living of all people over money.

If I could meet Tshering Tobgay in person, I would ask the following questions.

1. What kinds of changes will Bhutan go through in regards to sustainability now that a new political party will be in place?
2. With the current political climate in the United States, what do you believe should be our main focus in reaching sustainability while providing this notion of “Gross National Happiness”?
3. What discussions have you had with your neighboring countries China and India about improving sustainability practices? And if there have not been, are there any plans to in the near future?

I was able to find an email address and I emailed him the following. Here is a screenshot.

