

**Bhutan's Vision for a Sustainable Future:
An Exclusive Interview with the Prime Minister of the
Kingdom of Bhutan, His Excellency Tshering Tobgay**

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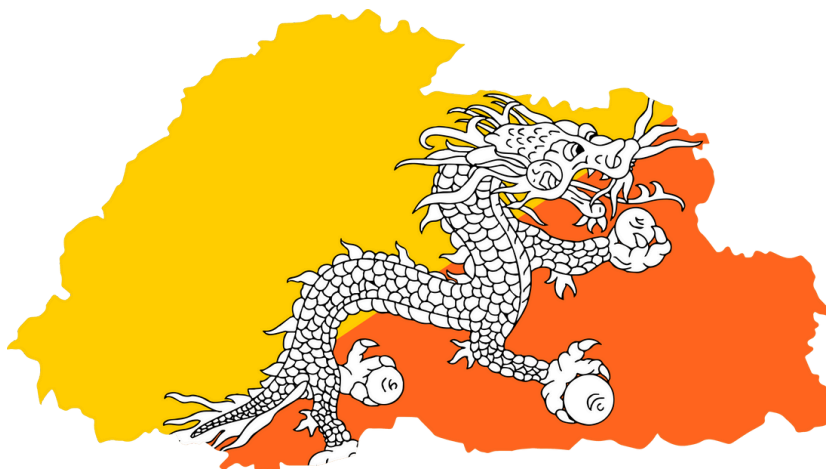
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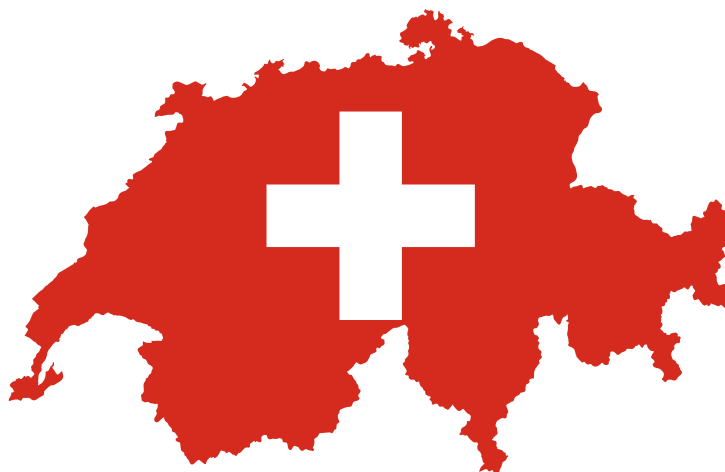




Singularity Academy Frontier Review is a peer-reviewed journal published by Singularity Academy Publishing House. Its aim is to promote the outcomes of cross-disciplinary collaboration at Singularity Academy and to stimulate discussions on various relevant issues. The journal covers both academic and practical aspects of topics such as sustainability, healthcare, economics, sociology, law, artificial intelligence, innovation, geopolitical relations, physics, theology, well-being, and the exploration of the universe.

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INTRODUCTION

On January 20, 2025, during the 2025 World Economic Forum, Singularity Academy formalised a strategic partnership with the Kingdom of Bhutan by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This collaboration is designed to advance sustainability initiatives across multiple sectors in Bhutan, focusing on timber engineering, education, healthcare, and other industries aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17. As part of this initiative, Singularity Academy will establish the **Singularity Bhutan Consortium** in Switzerland to foster interdisciplinary cooperation, research, and innovation, thereby reinforcing Bhutan's commitment to sustainable development and global partnerships.

Following up on this initiative, Singularity Academy had the privilege of interviewing the Prime Minister of Bhutan, **Mr. Tshering Tobgay**. The interview questions by Prof. Dr. Ying Zhang, the president of Singularity Academy, were kindly answered by **His Excellency Tshering Tobgay**, focusing on Bhutan's vision for attracting sustainability-driven investors and talent, the country's commitment to education and sustainability, and its global contributions to peace and environmental conservation. **Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay** also shared his insights on Bhutan's ambitious Mindfulness City project, the evolution of its education system, and its leadership in climate action, highlighting how Bhutan's unique philosophy of Gross National Happiness continues to shape its future.

Singularity Academy extends its highest appreciation to **Mr. Tenzin Rondel Wangchuk**, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Bhutan to the United Nations, for his dedicated efforts in promoting Bhutan in Europe and Switzerland.





INVESTORS AND TALENTS TO BHUTAN: OPPORTUNITIES AND VISION

Question by Prof. Dr. Ying Zhang

Bhutan uniquely appeals as a country deeply committed to Gross National Happiness and sustainability. What types of investors and talents does Bhutan seek to attract, and how does the government (and the King) envision aligning their contributions with the country's economic and social priorities? Are there specific sectors, such as education, technology, or sustainable industries, Bhutan views as particularly strategic for its development?

Answer by Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay

The answer partially lies in the question itself. Bhutan seeks to work with purpose driven investors and talent that shares our GNH values and commitment to sustainability.

Under the enlightened leadership of our Kings, GNH has been the overarching guiding development philosophy of Bhutan that places the well-being and happiness of our people at the centre of all our development efforts while ensuring that our culture and traditions remain intact and our environment is safeguarded for all times to come. We have achieved much success through this approach, increasing per capita income, life expectancy, and literacy rates while ensuring the country's natural environment and biodiversity remain protected.

In some ways, Bhutan's success in health and education has also created what has emerged as a key modern-day challenge. Public sector investments have primarily driven Bhutan's economy, and it has not been able to develop adequate, high-quality, and well-paying jobs. In the years following the pandemic, educated Bhutanese youth and professionals are leaving the country in large numbers to seek better economic opportunities abroad.





As a small country with an even smaller population, this is a matter of concern and addressing this has become a national priority. It has become critical to achieve accelerated economic growth to create meaningful opportunities which meet the aspirations of Bhutanese youth. This has to be done in a manner that is in keeping with the timeless values of GNH.

To do this, Bhutan is embarking on an ambitious first-of-its-kind project to build the world's first mindfulness city to serve as an economic hub in the fastest-growing region. The city will be one-of-a-kind, anchored on the vision and values of GNH, encompassing conscious and sustainable businesses inspired by Buddhist spiritual heritage and distinguished by the uniqueness of the Bhutanese identity. The GMC will become a gateway connecting Bhutan to the world and will capitalize on the rise of the Asian century.

An undertaking of this scale opens up many opportunities for investors as well as global and national talent alike, with many best-in-class companies and global talent already on board.

Building the world's first mindfulness city will entail substantial expansion of Bhutan's energy sector, creating efficient and reliable connectivity, digital infrastructure and building the necessary skills to ensure that Bhutanese are well placed to benefit from the resulting opportunities.

The GMC will provide world-class infrastructure, including airports, residential homes, offices, recreational facilities, educational institutions, healthcare services, and hospitality services. But the true focus will be on the "software"—the essential, often more difficult, but critical components that will set the GMC apart. This includes a robust governance framework, with business-friendly laws, enabling regulations, and supportive institutions.

Bhutan is offering investors and global talent a unique opportunity to be part of this project and essentially build and shape these critical components from the ground up. This we know will appeal only to a certain category of investors and talent.





EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY: BHUTAN'S DIFFERENTIATION

Question by Prof. Dr. Ying Zhang

In the global landscape, where education and sustainability are gaining immense importance, how does Bhutan plan to position itself as a leading role in these areas? What are the key goals and initiatives that will differentiate Bhutan from other nations, and how does the government aim to integrate its cultural values and sustainability principles into this vision, particularly in educational innovation and international collaborations?

Answer by Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay

Education remains a key strategic sector for Bhutan for a number of reasons. For a small country of just over 750,000 people, the importance of education and skilling cannot be overstated. What we lack in numbers, we have to make up for by providing world class education and relevant skills to every Bhutanese.

Right to free basic education has been enshrined in the country's constitution. Bhutan's holistic education system, both modern and monastic, has been a success story. Our national literacy rate today stands at 70.6% and youth literacy rate at over 97%.

However, the demands of this century are both qualitatively and quantitatively different. Digital learning platforms and artificial intelligence (AI)-powered tools are transforming traditional education models and leading to significant global shifts in education systems and practices. The future is digital, and our education system needs to continuously evolve to keep pace and ensure that our children's education is relevant and creates conscientious citizens. Incorporating modern technologies and fostering international collaboration will be essential for preparing our children for an increasingly interconnected and rapidly evolving world.





For Bhutan, our challenge is adapting our education system to align with these global trends while preserving our unique cultural values. We are revisiting our curriculum, pedagogy, learning process, and assessments in view of the challenges and opportunities of the twenty-first century. While doing so, we are prioritising holistic development so that they become dependable and honest human beings. We see education as the means of grounding our children in our country's history, culture, tradition, and value system.

This is an area in which Bhutan looks forward to learning from its successes and international best practices, and it is continuously seeking meaningful collaboration with educators and institutions.

A case in point: Bhutan has initiated collaboration with Cambridge International to refine key aspects of our overall educational framework. A comprehensive enhancement of our curriculum will be undertaken to foster critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills. This shift will encourage students to engage more deeply with the material and develop the kind of analytical thinking that is essential for success in today's globalized world.

But a transformative initiative for integrating cultural values and transmitting sustainability principles from one generation to the next would be the institution of the Gyalsung Programme which was launched in September of last year. This is Bhutan's national service programme which differs from similar programmes in its design and intent. It aims to endow very young Bhutanese with personal attributes and professional skills needed to succeed in the 21st century. Unlike traditional National Service programs across the world, the primary objective of Gyalsung - Bhutan's National Service is not focused on military objectives. Instead, its core mandates are derived from the preamble of the Gyalsung Act, which emphasises youth skills development, instilling and nurturing fundamental values of discipline and integrity, amongst others.





Bhutan's Gyalsung Service is designed to equip young Bhutanese with practical and diverse skill sets, enabling them to contribute productively to the nation's development across various domains. While discipline and integrity are fostered through the training, the primary emphasis is on empowering youth with essential skills, knowledge, and values that will benefit them and the country's overall progress. This multifaceted approach sets Gyalsung apart from conventional military conscription models, which typically focus exclusively on combat training and military readiness. By integrating skill development, disaster management, and community service components, Gyalsung aims to cultivate a well-rounded and capable youth force that can positively impact the nation's socio-economic growth and resilience.

GLOBAL CONTRIBUTION TO PEACE, PROSPERITY, AND SUSTAINABILITY

Question by Prof. Dr. Ying Zhang

Bhutan is widely admired for its commitment to environmental conservation and holistic development. As the world faces climate change, inequality, and conflicts, what specific contributions is Bhutan willing to make toward global peace, prosperity, and sustainability? How can Bhutan's policies, practices, and philosophies serve as a model or inspiration for other nations to achieve a more balanced and harmonious future?

Answer by Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay

For generations, the visionary Kings of Bhutan placed utmost priority on the conservation of nature and environmental protection. As a result, today Bhutan is a carbon negative country with almost 70% of the country under forest cover. Our Constitution requires that at least 60% of the country be under forest cover for all times to come. Given our resource constraints and the immense economic gains foregone, I would consider this a significant contribution from Bhutan toward global peace, prosperity and sustainability. In addition, last year the Parliament declared a new biological corridor, BC9 as a result of which 52% of the country is declared as protected area.





To sustain our environmental efforts, Bhutan has pioneered innovative financing solutions. The Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation, established in 1991, was the world's first environmental trust fund. More recently, the "Bhutan for Life" initiative, in partnership with WWF-US and private donors, has created a lasting financial model to ensure the continued protection of Bhutan's rich biodiversity. Many countries have drawn inspiration from our financing model and have set up similar financing models such as those in Brazil, Costa Rica, Mongolia, Colombia and Peru.

At the recent COP 29 in Azerbaijan, Bhutan together with Panama, Suriname and Madagascar spearheaded the launch of the G-ZERO coalition of carbon neutral and negative countries to advance global climate action. The forum's central goal is to prove that carbon neutrality is not only possible but essential, and will advocate for intensified climate action and greater international cooperation.

These achievements and initiatives are not accidental but the result of deliberate policies and actions, guided by deep reverence for nature and a commitment to sustainable development guided by our development philosophy of GNH.

Bhutan's environmental stewardship under the guidance of our enlightened Kings and our development philosophy of GNH has been increasingly recognised globally.

His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the Fourth King and the people of the Kingdom of Bhutan were the recipients of the first 'Champion of the Earth' award in 2005 instituted by UNEP.

In 2006, His Majesty the Fourth King was awarded the prestigious World Wildlife Fund J. Paul Getty Award for Conservation Leadership and was inducted into the Kyoto Earth Hall of Fame for His Majesty's outstanding contribution to the protection of the global environment in 2011.





In 2019 the United Nations Development Programme presented a Special Award of Recognition to His Majesty The King to honour His Majesty's leadership in advancing human development and the wellbeing and happiness of the people of Bhutan. The Award recognised three major Human Development Achievements: His Majesty's championing of the holistic development paradigm of Gross National Happiness, His Majesty's leadership in environment conservation and climate action which has resulted in Bhutan being the only carbon negative country in the world, and His Majesty's guidance, which ensured a smooth transition of the system of governance and strong democratic foundations to be established in Bhutan.

His Majesty the Fourth King was awarded the 2022 Blue Planet Prize by the Asahi Glass Foundation of Japan in recognition of His Majesty The Fourth King's visionary leadership and the contribution to environmental conservation made by His Majesty the Fourth King's development philosophy of Gross National Happiness which has found scientific recognition and wider adoption worldwide.

My personal wish is for every country on earth to embrace the values of GNH, that places mother nature at the heart of everything we do. If that happens, the world will truly be a far better place.





CONCLUSION

Bhutan stands as a beacon of sustainability, mindful development, and cultural preservation. Through strategic investments, progressive education policies, and unwavering environmental commitment, Bhutan is charting a path that balances economic growth with holistic well-being. The Prime Minister's vision serves as an inspiration for nations seeking sustainable and purpose-driven development models.

Singularity Academy is honored to have hosted this insightful conversation and looks forward to future collaborations that align with Bhutan's values and aspirations.





ABOUT SINGULARITY ACADEMY

Singularity Academy, headquartered in Zurich, with campuses across the Netherlands, Germany, and Switzerland, is a hybrid research and educational institute that aims to provide students and audiences with a unique platform for knowledge learning, exchange, and wisdom across multi-level and cross-disciplinary fields. Singularity Academy gathers world-level gurus, masters, and mentors to share their insights and knowledge online and offline. It assists each Singularity Academy member in integrating knowledge from education, frontier research, and best practices with the tenets of humanity and sustainability. Singularity Academy creates a non-conventional education system dedicated to a positive education revolution and healthcare improvement. Singularity Academy helps its members identify their singular point/moment for their humanity-centred, sustainable, and infinite growth.

Over the years, Singularity Academy has been an Innovative Leader in the education sector, taking a unique approach to helping students discover their true selves while prioritising humanity and sustainability, all in service of the greater good. Singularity Academy is widely acclaimed as one of Switzerland's most forward-thinking and innovative educational institutions. Departing from traditional methods, the academy incorporates technology into its academic programs, offering tailored holistic programs for students. Singularity Academy encompasses the entire personal development process, involving consulting, education, research, publications, incubation, wellness, legal counsel and compliance consulting, and healthcare provision. This enables the academy to integrate teaching, research, and practical application across various levels, including K-12 Education consulting, bachelor and master level of education, executive continuous education, micro-learning, and DBA programs in multiple fields.

