

Gross National Happiness : The Need of Hour

Dr. Zunjarrao Shrimant Kadam

Associate Prof. Psychology

Yashwantarao Chavan Mahavidhyala Pachwad

drzunjarkadam@gmail.com

Abstract

A variety of biological, psychological, religious, and philosophical approaches have striven to define happiness and identify its sources. It is a fuzzy concept and can mean many different things to many people. It is in fact a state of mind that cannot be defined in words. Happiness is not measurable. Now the question arises what is Gross National Happiness. The term Gross National Happiness was coined by Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the fourth king of Bhutan in the 1970s. The term implies a holistic and sustainable approach to development which balances between material and non-material values with the conviction that humans want to search for happiness. The objective of GNH is to achieve a balanced development in all facets of life which is essential to our happiness. Gross national happiness emphasizes the importance of happiness as a function of meeting both the mental and physical needs of individuals. Unlike GDP based economic models, the philosophy of Gross National Happiness considers economic growth as one of the means towards achieving happiness and not as the ultimate objective of development. The sustainable development should not depend solely on economic aspects of wellbeing as it addresses the notion of progress. The key to the successful life depend on gnn i.e. Gross National Happiness and we all should strive for it.

KEY WORD – HAPPINESS

Introduction –

Life is a beautiful gift given by God to human beings. We should not take it for granted. We should accept all the challenges of life and lead happy life. Many philosophers tried to define happiness but nobody can define it completely expect the one who experiences it. In fact happiness is a mental or emotional state of well being characterized by positive or pleasant emotions ranging from contentment to intense joy. Everyone wants to have happiness but happiness like air or water is a hard thing to grasp. Modern era has become the era of materialism which results into the drastic increase in life's complexities and tensions. In the present scenario, people associate happiness with the material pursuits. They assume that the more material possessions they have, the more happier they are. This is the reason that there is so much hue and cry for accumulating more and more wealth. People have made themselves as machines for producing money. In fact, they all are trying to earn at the cost of their mental and internal happiness and peace. This results

into many mental and physical problems like hypertension, happiness, insomnia, high blood pressure, diabetics etc. The question what is happiness does not arise in their hearts, because in their hearts they treat life full of sensory joys as a happy life.

In the so called modern era, people are leading such a miserable life, full of disturbance, non contentment, and jealousy in the rat race of progress. As the economic aspects of well being are given more importance, Gross national Product is considered to be the punch line of Progress and prosperity But now the need of the hour is to achieve GROSS NATIONAL HAPPINESS.

What is Gross National Happiness –

The term Gross National Happiness was coined by Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the fourth king of Bhutan in the 1970s. The term implies a holistic and sustainable approach to development which balances between material and non-material values with the conviction that humans want to search for happiness. The objective of GNH is to achieve a balanced development in all facets of life which is essential to our happiness. They fail to recognize the

fact that happiness comes from within. It has its direct connection with heart. If people are happy from within, definitely it will be reflected.

Gross National Happiness was coined by Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the fourth king of Bhutan in the 1970's. The term implies a holistic and holistic and sustainable approach to development which balances between material and non-material values with the conviction that humans want to search for happiness. The objective of GNH is to achieve a balanced development in all facets of life which is essential to our happiness comes from within. It has its direct connection with heart. If people are happy from within, definitely it will be reflected.

Gross National Happiness implies that sustainable development should take a holistic approach towards notions of progress and give equal important to non-economic aspects of wellbeing. The term Gross national happiness is an attempt to measure, through psychological and physiological means a country's happiness, as a direct reference to GDP (Gross Domestic Product). At individual level, happiness can be enhanced by information training and guidance of individual citizens. The essence of the philosophy of Gross national Happiness is the peace and happiness of our people and the security and soverieghnty of the nation. Beneficial development of human society takes place when material and spiritual development occur side by side to complement and reinforce each other.

Education contributes to the knowledge, values, creativity, skills, human capital and civic sensibility of citizens. It strongly boosts a nation's economy and enables efficient and wise decision making. Knowledge will decide the quality and destiny of nations. Educational qualification positively impacts the quality of life experienced by people although the degree of impact differs across countries. Infusing Gross National Happiness into the education system is not adding a new subject but enriching and improving the process of education. It has to do with creating a content and approach that infuse a Gross National happiness consciousness into everything that is learned and taught. This will make the curriculum and learning more enjoyable, more pleasurable, and more relevant. Keeping in view the importance of Gross National Happiness, Honourable Prime Minister, "Infusing GNH into the education

system is not adding a new subject but enriching, and improving the process of education. It has to do with creating a content and approach that infuse a GNH consciousness into everything that is learned and taught. This will make the curriculum and learning more enjoyable more pleasurable and more relevant. The concept of Gross National Happiness consists of four pillars. Fair socioeconomic development (better education and health), conservation and promotion of a vibrant culture, environmental protection and good governance.

The four pillars and further elaborated in nine domains. Psychological well being, living standard, health, culture, education, community vitality, good governance, balanced time use and ecological integration. In accordance with these nine domains, Bhutan has developed 38 subindexes, 72 indicators and 151 variables that are used to define and analyze the happiness of the Bhutanese people.

Focus of Gross National Happiness –

1. The concept of gross national happiness is Premised on the belief that all human beings aspire to happiness in one way or another, the concept promotes collective happiness of the society as the ultimate goal of development.
2. Gross national happiness emphasizes the important of happiness as a function of meeting both the mental and physical needs of individuals. Unlike GDP based economic models, the philosophy of Gross National Happiness considers economic growth as one of the means towards achieving happiness and not as the ultimate objective of development. Thus, while the GDP- based economic model promotes limitless material growth for the excessive comfort of our body, GNH offers a holistic paradigm with which the mind receives equal attention.
3. While GNU recognizes the importance of individual happiness, it emphasizes that happiness must be realized as a collective or societal goal and not be defined as an individualized or competitive good.
4. The philosophy of GNH is based on four main pillars – (i) equitable and sustainable socioeconomic development, (ii) preservation and promotion of its culture, (iii) conservation of environment and (iv) promotion of good governance.

Domains Of Gross National Happiness

1. Psychological well being

Psychological well-being refers to the internal evaluation of the people of their life. It is in fact the experience of the respondent and their own perception of their lives, it refers to how people evaluate their lives. It is an information based appraisal of one's life that is when a person gives conscious evaluative judgments about one's satisfaction with life as a whole. Researchers have proved that the people who score high in psychological well being later earn high income and perform better at work than people who score low in well-being. It is also found to be related to physical health. Psychological well-being is therefore valuable not only because it assesses well being more directly but it has beneficial consequences. A Gross National Happiness society calls for the inclusion of well being indicators at par with economic ones. Media should provide attention to how a society is progressing in terms of psychological well being and politicians should base their campaigns on their plans for reducing distress, increasing life satisfaction and happiness level.

2. Standard of living and happiness –

Standard of living is one of the important determinants of well being or happiness. It refers to the material basis of well-being, which is reflected in a person's consumption level. Obviously, improvement of living standard constitutes the major objective of plans and programs of both developed and developing countries. Many Studies have focused on how standards of living affect the happiness of the people. In many countries modern life has improved people's standard of living. but people seem nevertheless generally not more happy with their lives. This can be regarded as a surprise with the level of prosperity at a historic high. To begin, happiness is hard to define as different people may have very different concept of happiness, but directly correlating standard of living with happiness is likely oversimplifying their relationship. While good life conditions certainly contribute to happiness, people in poor countries frequently express surprisingly high levels of happiness in opinion polls. For some people fulfilling work and social relationships probably add more to happiness than being able to afford

luxury goods. Furthermore people might not even compare their current standard of living to the standard of the past. Instead they are more likely to see how they are holding up with their neighbours of community. So in their perception their standard of living might not even seem very high relative to their peers. In additional in countries with high standard of living an increase might not make a major difference to the individual's standard of living. Also economic advancement comes with some side effects for the entire society and individuals. While it improves prosperity, it can hurt other social requirements and needs. There might be more traffic and pollution. Individuals may face higher pressure as well as greater complexity in the work place and find less time to spend with families and friends.

3. Good Governance and Gross National Happiness –.

Good governance is one of the domains of Gross National Happiness (GNH) aimed towards enhancing the well being of the people. Unlike other domains, governance cuts across all domains/sectors and therefore, its effect on the society at large arises from the cumulative efforts of all sectors. Happiness has also been the ultimate purpose of social and economic development plans and programs since the early seventies. Although GNH was not expressed explicitly then, the provision of free health and education services, development of basic infrastructure, supply of clean drinking water, allotment of free timber to build houses, granting land have been all aimed towards reducing misery and enhancing the welfare of the citizens. The pursuit of GNH is further continued by changing the political system from a monarchy to a parliamentary democracy.

4. Health –

Promotion of health and happiness of its citizens are the ultimate goal of most state policies. State policies are increasingly directed towards enhancing well being of its people which for so long have been concentrated only on economic fronts. Health and happiness, although are two distinct and different things, have very thin line separating from one another. Most of the determinants of health and happiness are common. For instance, education, income and exercise can lead to good health as well as happiness. Whether happiness leads to better health or vice versa is a

chicken and egg problem. This correlates with WHO's definition of health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." If health is a strong determinant of happiness, as discussed above then there is every reason for enhancement of health to be a policy priority of the state. Since the start of planned development in the early sixties, the Royal Government has accorded a high priority to promotion of good health of its population. The WHO's definition of health is a holistic one.

5. Education –

Education contributes to the knowledge, values, creativity, skills human capital and civic sensibility of citizens. It strongly boosts a nation's economy and enables efficient and wise decision making. T.S. Powdye (2004) aptly puts. Knowledge will decide the quality and destiny of nations. Education qualification is found to positively impact the quality of life experienced by people although the degree of impact differs across countries (Doh S. Shinn 1986). A study done by Culvert Group, Ltd, and Hazel Henderson on Quality of Life indicators found that individuals with lower literacy skills were much more likely to be living in poverty than individuals with higher literacy skills. The same study also found that people with higher level of literacy skills are more likely to be involved in democracy through voting.

6. Community Vitality –

The research has shown that an increase in material well being over time does not increase the happiness of the people. An increase in income definitely raises the happiness of the people with low income, but stops to do so beyond a certain level (Inglehart 1999). Besides an excessive focus on material development has led to a diminished sense of community in some countries. Definitions of community are varied, but show three general characteristics : It is a social group people in it have common activities and experiences, and it occupies a definite territorial area (Hoffer 1931). This study pertains to determinants and methods that could maximize well being and vitality of the community, as well as revitalize moribund communities. It examines interactions and relationships within and to some extent, across communities. By looking at specific dimensions of community vitality, such as giving and

volunteering, social cohesion, safety, family, and duration of stay in the community, this paper gives some ideas on the state of community vitality in Bhutan. Relationships between these variables are also analyzed.

7. Times use and Happiness -

Time is an important resource for everyone. It is also a limited resource in that we have only 24 hours in a day to put to competing uses. How we use this limited resources is important and has implications for our economic and social well being. Given this importance, the use or allocation of time has been studied by academics and policy analysts since the early twentieth century's are taken into account. Time use studies provide information on the work life balance of individuals in society. They provide information on the number of hours and individual spends on work and other activities, such as socializing with family and friends, sports, and other leisure activities. Imbalance in time allocation between work and other activities is caused by a number of factors among which the increased number of work hours is the most prominent. An increase in work hours, in turn, is among other factors, caused by one's desire to make more money. Money becomes the focus or the driving force behind long hours of work for many individuals. These individuals exaggerate the importance of money for their well being, and they get into a situation of what has been called focusing illusion. As they devote more time to work they do not find time to do things that they enjoy. Such people are not happier but are much more stressed than others. As individuals juggle to do so many things, they easily become stressed.

Conclusion

In the end, I would like to say that Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross National Product. If we pay all of our attention in attaining gross national product, surely we will be deprived of the real happiness and joy of life. Money has little relation with happiness. The sustainable development should not depend solely on economic aspects of wellbeing as it addresses the notion of progress. The key to the successful life depend on GNH i.e. Gross National Happiness and we all should strive for it. Happiness lies within us, it is not something found outside, therefore, one have to go

within or go without. It is not a destination but it is a way of living, state of mind and signpost on the road to mastery.

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