



GROSS NATIONAL HAPPINESS (GNH): A WAY FROM NATIONAL HAPPINESS TO GLOBAL HAPPINESS

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ABSTRACT

Chasing happiness has become a global agenda in today's unrest life where everyone is helpless before stressful living standard, unsustainable environment, unknown pandemics, ill physical, mental and emotional health, poor psychological wellbeing, pervasive influence of technology, relentless search of self-interest at any cost and so on. Globalising development with happiness is the cry of the Earth today. From the core of Himalayan mountain range, Bhutan, a land-locked country, in a state of peace, good will, natural preservation and promotion of culture, Environmental Conservation, Good Governance and Sustainable and equitable socio-economic development, concerted on Gross National Happiness (GNH), endorsing GNP and GDP as unsustainable measures of development with happiness. The operationalization of the methods and tools of GNH is also improving the quality of the living standard of the people of Bhutan as per the GNH survey 2022. Against this background, the paper is an attempt to generalise the GNH model of happiness in Bhutan in particular and over the globe in general.

KEY WORDS: Gross National Happiness, Sustainable Development, Global Happiness, Environmental conservation, Good Governance,

INTRODUCTION: HAPPINESS TO GNH

Happiness is the ultimate goal of life. A life without happiness is like a life without success. Life is not all about earning money, building palatial and multi-storeyed house cubes, using luxurious vehicles, being rich and sophisticated, enjoying all covetous requirements and necessities and so on. It is necessary to have materialistic needs for maintaining well-appointed life but the real and successful life can be free from it and lead towards a life of spirituality. From a long distance over 2000 years ago in the perception of "Eudaimonia as a concept of virtue" believed happiness as the sole purpose of life, the complete objective and culmination of human existence". **Laura Mousikanski et.al. (2024)**. Happiness is a harmonious relationship among our thoughts, our speeches and our duties (Karma). In kabir Doha, happiness is something "Beyond Yourself" meaning feeling a sense of eternal truth of selflessness. Individuals can be happy with "Buddhist Panchsheel" such as Non-violence referring refraining from taking life of others; Non-theft or not to take any which is not for him; Non-indulgence or free from sensual misconduct; Adherence to truth; Non-addiction refers free from intoxication; **Gauba, O.P (2017)**. Happiness may be classified as 'satvic' means substantive, 'Rajasic' means sensory needs, and 'Tamasic' based in misleading oneself in the Bhagavat Gita but the real goal of life is taking 'salvation or freedom through renunciations' (Bhagavat Gita: 18:36). Further, Life should be organised, calm, simple, holistic, peaceful, generosity, constructive, futuristic, sustainable, natural and loving to all. Happiness in life is an eternal feeling for all, which refers a sense of joy, comfort, secure, satisfaction, a sense of pious feeling. In the same way, being a land locked country, from the

small Himalayan core, Bhutan, interpreted a great sense of spiritual and holistic happiness by introducing the everlasting concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH). From His majesty King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck "I believe that while gross National Happiness is inherently Bhutanese, its ideas may have a positive relevance to any nation, peoples or communities- wherever it may be". Rabgyel, K.(2023). GNH is the brain child of the fourth king of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, where the king introduced the non-economic means of progress and wellbeing which leads to sustainable development and global happiness. In the late 1960s, a period during which Bhutan's development policy is generally considered to have followed conventional patterns of rapid modernization, Late King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck expressed his view on the goal of development as making "the people prosperous and happy." Similarly, the prominence of "prosperity and happiness" is highlighted in the king's address on the occasion of Bhutan's admission to the UN in 1971, one of the most important events in the country's recent history. This vision, first articulated by the late king was elaborated by the present king, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, who declared in the first years of his reign that "our country's policy is to consolidate our sovereignty to achieve economic self-reliance, prosperity and happiness for our country and people." While the emphasis is placed on both, prosperity and happiness, the latter is considered of more significance. For Bhutan "Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross National Product" The yardstick of Bhutanese development has always been emotional well-being rather than mere economic progress, this section explores the influencing and determining factors of the concept. (**Wangchuk, 2008**)



GNH: A BHUTANESE CONCEPT

Gross National Happiness (GNH) is the philosophy of the government of Bhutan which was found as a reaction against the adverse impact of economic development and the unsustainable growth on the society and environment. Bhutan, a small Himalayan kingdom, has a new sustainable method of development as well as happiness. **Mohapatra A.K. (2008)**. It is an alternative to today's means of development such as Gross National Product (GNP) and Gross Domestic Product (GDP), what Bhutan thinks. GNH is based on four pillars and nine domains.

The **four pillars** are

1. Sustainable and equitable socio-economic development.
2. Environmental conservation
3. Preservation and promotion of culture
4. Good Governance

The **Nine domains** are

1. Psychological wellbeing
2. Health
3. Time use
4. Education
5. Cultural diversity and resilience
6. Good Governance
7. Community Vitality
8. Ecological diversity and resilience
9. Living Standards

Further it also works on 72 indicators in its operationalization in the country. The Bhutanese Gross National Happiness Commission (GNHC) is a legal institution that promotes the happiness environment, development towards happiness to all Bhutanese people. It also works for long-term sustainable socio-economic development and strategies and guides policy formulation.

GNH: A BUDDHIST APPROACH

Bhutan is a land of rich and distinctive traditional inheritance. It has a strong Buddhist history of progress and wellbeing. Gross National Happiness (GNH) emphasized on to building an economy that would work Bhutan's incomparable culture initiated by Buddhist spiritual values and ideas which coincides that nothing in life is permanent, everything is temporary and changeable; happiness in life does not lie with the things one possess and one does not find the eternal, unchanging soul and "self-realization" which is just an accumulation of dynamic features and dimension. One can find Buddhist rituals such as Idolatry or reverence towards Buddhas, Bodhisattva, Buddhist teachings and sacred objects such as bowing, chanting, protective rights, life cycle rights, money wheels, pilgrimage grooming among the Buddhists culture. There is a strong sense of Buddhist education including Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana schools in Bhutan. The people believe that these three schools of thoughts are the three mediums to cross the ocean of materialistic world or samsara towards the bound of eternal happiness and living enlightenment. The four notable thoughts are the statement of suffering, the fact of the grounds of suffering, the actuality of the end of suffering, and the absolute right path towards the end of suffering, are the basic idea behind the educational success of the country.

GNH: AS NATIONAL HAPPINESS

GNH has been operational with the tools and indicators like the pillars, domains in the small Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan. The recent GNH Index focuses on the individual level of wealthiest and wellbeing by applying the 33 GNH conditions with 66% of the 33 adjusted indicators and domains. The study finds the percentage of people who are happy with the level of happiness attained by those who are going to be happy with the measuring scale of 0 to 1, where if one goes towards 0 then it is low GNH and the reverse is high and successful GNH.

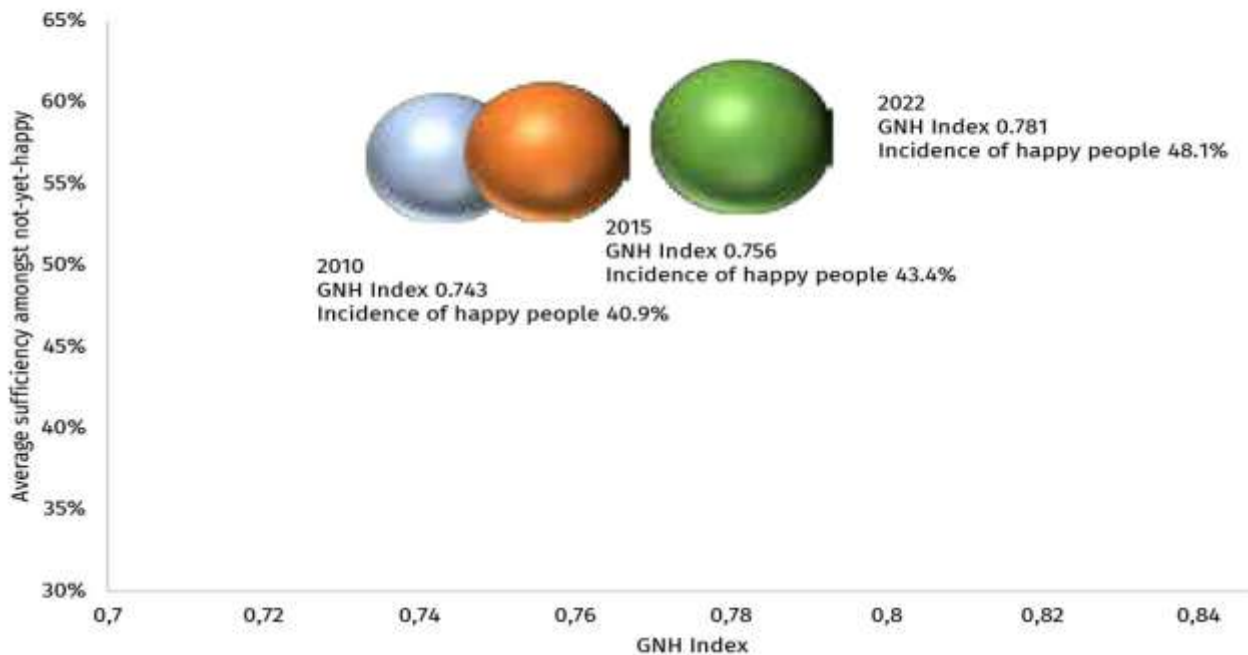


Figure-1

As per the 2022 GNH survey report, GNH index was conducted by taking a sample of 11000 people of Bhutan crosswise dominion, age cohorts, genders, occupations as well as its movements, plan of actions and entails. It is found that people from many occupations and walks of life does not need all the domains to have the grounds and circumstances of wellbeing and happiness. Further, the happiest people also lack healthiness in index changing from negative feeling to literacy to income with a mass of other achievements. So far as the monetary inputs to various degrees are concerned GNH visualizes a several patterns of human flourishing and prospering. The GNH Index 2022 indicates that 48.1% of those aged 15 years and above were classified as happy. From 2010 to 2022 the percentage of happy people has been increased over time, from 40.9% in 2010 to 48.1% in 2022 (Figure 2). Further, The GNH Scale of measurement criterion enhanced importantly from 0.743 in 2010 to 0.781 in 2022. The growing graph of happiness index signifies the nation's contentedness in developing an surrounding that promotes well-being and happiness from the national point of view. Further the remaining 51.9% of people of Bhutan are under the happiness guidelines, because of several reasons like lack of sleep, low mental health, ignorance about cultural preservation, lack of

participation in cultural activities, less political participation and so on. From the growing development of happiest people shows that Bhutan needs the strict implementation of the future GNH policies and programme for a grand success. There is a remarkable progress in improving the living standards of people in Bhutan in housing. It is found that one-third of Bhutanese have witnessed an transformation by appropriate roofing substantial, accumulated comfort station with superior, and developed room. So far as cultural participation is concerned, Cultural heritage has a significant role in determining the geographical identity, cultural uniqueness and development of community interconnection and social bonding. The GNH ways to construct a happy, healthy culture needs more participation and contribution aiming a global happiness model. In the context of political participation, political leaders are trying to create an atmosphere of trust, transparency, accountability, cohesiveness and inclusiveness. By Promoting a culture of participative citizenship and easing the voting behaviour, one can endow people in the form of nation building. **Alkire. S OPHI Director, and Zangmo.T, Researcher at OPHI, (2023)**

Figure 2. National GNH Index and share of happy people, 2010–22¹



1 Size of the bubble represents the incidence of happy people.

Source: <https://www.mppn.org/beyond-gdp-bhutans-gnh-index-unveiling-the-path-to-human-flourishing/>

GNH AS A MODEL OF GLOBAL HAPPINESS

Today's Development in the ocean of desertification, misery, pollution, unexpected pandemics, stress, deprives people a from the life of happiness and inner wellbeing. The yardstick models of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the Gross National Product (GNP) have somewhere failed while visualising the life satisfaction perception of the richest people today. The GNH model has promised the happiness of the people rather than the traditional models of wellbeing. Development with environment, in a humanistic face, with sustainability, natural protection, living without encroaching the conditions of nature, self and voluntary participation of the people in a eco-friendly way, by enjoying the almighty's creation with a cementing promise 'not to harm, but to help' in a compulsory action and so on has become the major agenda of the GNH model of happiness by the Gross National Happiness Commission (GNHC) today. In order to create a natural environment, conservation of the gorgeous bio-diversity, eradication and prevention of all kinds of environmental degradation measures, Article-5 of the constitution of Bhutan, emphasises on the vigilant and all active role of each and every citizen in this context. The GNH model could be a global model of development with happiness if the vitality of all the proposals and tolls would be tested in matter and spirit across the globe. The values and implementation of GNH could be acclaimed relevant, easy understanding, based on unity and integrity, humanity and ethics, mental satisfaction, community vitality, in comparison with GDP and GNP. Looking towards the concept "what is next to GNP and GDP ?", Bhutan's GNH method in

proceeding the global conversation on measuring wellbeing serves as a key illustration of an alternative model of development with sustainability aiming towards a holistic wellbeing and economic progress. The global forums need to implement the GNH model for global happiness by accuracy in implementing the multidimensional indicators to measure welfare by inculcating a global policy index process in a more holistic way with the required economic needs. James Foster from George Washington University has pioneered by viewing "GNH will lead to increased interest in its application to policymaking beyond Bhutan's borders", coincides the global forum of GNH.

Being spirited with GNH index in Bhutan's official acceptance as a guiding policy code and principal measure of growth, the countries around the globe are exploring it as an alteration to GDP and GNP. In this approach the UN, endorsed by 68 countries have considered Bhutan's GNH model can be simulated transversely as a global model of sustainability. The means life satisfaction, happiness and well-being in UK, the commission for the consideration of economic metrics beyond GDP and GNP by well-being and environmental indicators of prosperity in France, regular investigations on the well-being and happiness of citizens in Canada, GNH conference 2010, held in Italy, the ecological indicators of well-being by the Dutch government of Netherland are the few visionary steps for the global happiness.



GNH AND SUSTAINABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: A PATH TO THE GLOBAL HAPPINESS:

Sustainable Development in a human face presumes to meet the needs of the present, with an un-compromising, everlasting, ever reaching Earth with all kinds of assets for future generations. GNH, being a sustainable model would encompass for the global happiness. From all walks of life of the total ecosystem, happiness is the ultimate end, refers to a clean environment, peaceful social life, balanced surroundings, nonviolent economic development, spirituality with cultural sustainability, strength protection, compensated time inedible, bendable work options, enhanced teaching and development openings are influential in people's happiness, health and productive capacity in the development of the social capitals. In GNH model practices, social and environmental responsibility, with sustainable and eco-friendly platforms, at individual level are the mainstream agendas of global wellbeing. For sustainable human development, GNH should be one-dimensional and wide ranging measure offering a more realistic assessment of even material prosperity and the mixture of moral and cultural values into the core of economic policy perspectives. Further the social offerings such as art strides, recitals, sharecroppers' arcades and ethnic merriments with parks, community centres and museums by policies, zoning laws for the grassroots development; Openness of practical opportunities at the government level and preservation and awareness raising campaigns around the globe. One may focus on perception of happiness of each individual for achieving the goal of global happiness which may include:

- Individual personal peace
- Social happiness
- Economic satisfaction
- Social Cohesiveness
- Eco-friendly environment
- Spiritual satisfaction
- Cultural integration
- Political life
- Religious toleration
- One earth- one common future.

CONCLUSION: RETHINKING AND REVITALISING TOWARDS GLOBAL HAPPINESS

Continuing from the above, still now GNH has been adopted as a path to holistic, spiritual, realizing the social, material as well as physical needs in a balanced society, promises to achieve development and happiness for ever. In the agenda of happiness, different countries of the world have Accepted, Adopted and Accelerated (A-A-A) several measures but Bhutan as the first country which has officially adopted GNH as a model of happiness as well as development by pointing towards global happiness. Unlike different global conferences on Sustainable Development, Earth Summit, world Environmental Summits, United Nations Conferences on Human Environment, Convention on Climate change, Convention on Biological Diversity, GNH may advocate with widespread approach from official level, marching towards the global happiness as well as development. The cry of the hour is

to develop global tools of happiness by 'Rethinking and Revitalising towards Global Happiness' from the grassroots to global level.

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