

BHUTAN: AN ADVOCATE OF GROSS NATION HAPPINESSNISHA JAISWAL¹¹Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Gorakhpur University Gorakhpur U.P. INDIA**ABSTRACT**

The most backward nation from economic parameters, Bhutan – A Lilliputian land, a buffer zone, a landlocked country between two antagonistic Asian Giants India and China was much ahead and advance in its thought and approach in exploring for what the human actually craved for i.e. happiness and where happiness lies. Now the first world countries are also applying the indices of happiness. It endorsed that amassing material wealth does not necessarily lead to happiness. Bhutan measures its progress not through GDP but through GNH (Gross National Happiness) which was brainchild of Fourth Druk Gylapo of Bhutan Jigme Singye Wangchuk.

KEY WORDS: *Bhutan, GDP, GNH, PQLI, OECD, HDI*

As, Aristotle stated very categorically “Happiness is the meaning and purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence” which is very true in toto regarding each and every individual. The idea of happiness is very subjective also, but after severe economic depression and world war II economists of the world argued that key to happiness lies in obtaining material development and enjoying it as well and thus came into existence G.D.P. (Gross Domestic Product) which means the total market value of all goods and services produced within a country in a specific duration of time. Today almost every country prefers G.D.P. to measure its economic health, but then there was also an emerging opinion that GDP had shortcomings as Robert F. Kennedy once stated. “It measures everything except that which makes life worthwhile. “It is true that what citizens really value is far beyond “G.D.P.” After that a series of theories were introduced. Way back in 1974 .Drenowski’s work on the measurement of levels of living and welfare and the OECD research Program on the measurement of social well being was created. In that series Morris David. Morris’s PQLI (Physical Quality of Life Index) received some attention. After that Pakistani economist Mahbub-ul-haq developed a number of indices to measure development which was accepted by the international community and came to be known as HDI (Human Development Index) Amartya Sen expanded it to capacity building. The most backward nation from economic parameters. Bhutan – A Lilliputian land, a buffer zone, a landlocked country between two antagonistic Asian Giants India and China was much ahead and advance in its thought and approach in exploring for what the human actually craved for i.e. happiness and where happiness lies. Now the first world countries are also applying the indices of happiness. It endorsed that amassing material wealth does not necessarily lead to happiness. Bhutan measures its progress not through GDP but through GNH (Gross National Happiness) which was brainchild of Fourth Druk Gylapo of Bhutan Jigme Singye Wangchuk.

Once His Majesty the third Druk Gylapo Jigme Dorji Wangchuck shared his views on the idea of the development of his subjects by making them prosperous and happy. He firmly expressed his views of prosperity and happiness on the occasion of Bhutan's admission to the United Nations in 1971. While the emphasis was laid on both prosperity and happiness, for fourth Druk Gylapo happiness was much more significant. So he emphasised on “Gross National Happiness” in comparison to “Gross Domestic Product”. In 1972 Druk Gyalpo Jigme Singye Wangchuck said that the rich are not always happy, while happy generally considered themselves rich. GNH first came to public global attention in 1986 when Zigme Singye Wangchuk the fourth king of Bhutan told the Financial Times “GNH is more important than GDP” in an interview in London. When the scholars stressed on the economic growth as the ultimate objective, which is considered to be traditional development model, the concept of Gross National Happiness is based on the idea that true and sustainable development of human society occurs when both material and spiritual development take place side by side to compliment and strengthen each other. The thought of Gross National Happiness received international recognition and the UN implemented the resolution “recognizing that Gross Domestic Product does not adequately reflect the happiness and well being of people “and that” the pursuit of happiness is a fundamental human goal. In 2011 the UN General Assembly passed resolution. “Happiness toward a holistic approach to development” urging member nations to follow the example of Bhutan and measure happiness and well being calling happiness of a “Fundamental Human Goal” 20th of March was declared as the International Day of Happiness by the UN in 2012 with resolution 66/ 28. For a long time Bhutan maintained isolation policy perhaps for its determined and methodological pursuit of the most exclusive of concepts, which among other things sought to achieve well being through the conservation and promotion of its culture Gross National Happiness refers to the

traditions mostly by resisting laissez - faire development. (*Wall Street Journal*, Oct,2013) The concept implies that sustainable development should take a holistic approach towards notions of progress and give equal importance to non-economic aspects of well being (Bhutan GNH Index). On January, 2017 the GNH centre's executive director Sammdu Chetri told Patrick Wood-ABC News Breakfast". We look into the development through the lenses of society and happiness. We measure the conditions of happiness and we say OK if there is increase in the conditions of the people in terms of happiness conditions, that we have developed. We don't look into technology or infrastructure for that matter as a means to see how we have developed". In 1998, the government of Bhutan established the Centre for Bhutan studies and GNH (CBSGNH) to conduct research on the topic. The institute's mandate was to develop GNH index and indicators that the government could build into its public policy decisions. Bhutan could then share this framework with the outside world with which the isolated Himalayan country was increasingly in contact. To that end, the GNH centre in Bhumthang developed what it calls the four pillars of GNH. These four pillars of GNH explain the concept. They are : 1. Good governance, 2. Sustainable socio-economic development,3. Cultural preservation, 4. Environmental conservation. These four pillars have been classified into 9 (Nine) domains so that one can easily understand what actually GNH stands for and its holistic range of values. This includes : 1. Psychological well being, 2. Health, 3. Education, 4. Time use, 5. Cultural diversity and resilience, 6. Good governance, 7. Community vitality, 8. Ecological diversity and resilience, and 9. Living standards. These nine domains can be explained as following :

PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL BEING

"As collective happiness is the main goal of GNH society, psychological well being is of primary importance in gauging the success of the state in providing appropriate policies and services". The psychological well being domain of the GNH questionnaire covers three areas : General psychological distress indicators, emotional balance indicators and spirituality indicators. Elements like prevalence rates of negative emotions (jealousy frustration selfishness) and positive emotions (Generosity, compassion, calmness) the practice of spiritual activities like meditation and prayers and overall life enjoyment are part of the domain.

HEALTH

The health indicators access the health status of the population, the determinants of health and health system. Health status indicators show information on self rated health disabilities, body mass index, number of health days per month, knowledge about HIV transmission and breastfeeding practices. (Karma,2008) Barriers to health or are also assessed according to the walking distance to the nearest health facility and access to

health services. The three areas in the health domain are health status, health knowledge and barriers to health.

EDUCATION

Education contributes to the knowledge, values, creativity, skills and civic sensibility of citizens"(ibid). The emphases of the education domain are on the effectiveness of contributing to collective well being. The education domain consists of the following areas: educational attainment. Dzongka language,folk and historical literacy.

TIME USE

"The domain of time use is one of the most effective windows on quality of life as it analyzes the nature of time spent within a 24 hour period, as well as activities that occupy longer periods of time"(Ibid). The time use domain highlights the value of non work time for happiness and overall quality of life. The domain was constructed under the assumption that non work activities such as "sleeping, personal care, community participation, education and learning, religious activities, social and cultural activities, sports leisure and travel add to a rich life and contribute to levels of happiness"(Ibid). Even though the "measurement of time devoted to unpaid work activities like care of children and sick members of a household and others can provide a proxy measure of the contribution made by unpaid activities to welfare"(Ibid).

CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND RESILIENCE

"Maintenance of cultural traditions has been one of Bhutan's primary policy goals, as traditions and cultural diversity contributes to identity, values and creativity"(Ibid). This domain considers the diversity and strength of cultural tradition through six areas: dialect use, traditional sports community festivals, artisan skill, value transmission and basic percept.

GOOD GOVERNANCE

"The mean of good governance evaluates how people perceive various government functions in terms of their efficacy, honesty and quality. The themes include human rights, leadership at various levels of government performance of government in delivering services and controlling inequality and corruption and people trust in the media, the judiciary and the police"(Ibid). The areas of the good governance domain are three: government performance freedom and institutional trust.

COMMUNITY VITALITY

"The domain of community vitality focuses on the strength and weakness of relationships and interactions within communities. It examines that nature of trust belongingness, vitality of caring, relationships, safety in home and community and giving and volunteering"(Ibid). The domain consists of seven areas family vitality, safety, reciprocity, trust social support, socialization and kinship density.

ECOLOGICAL DIVERSITY AND RESILIENCE

By examining the state of Bhutan's natural resource the pressures of ecosystems and different management responses the domain of ecological diversity and resilience is intended to describe the impact of domestic supply and demand on Bhutan's ecosystem the ecology domain mainly focuses on perpetual data on ecology since most of the objective measurements of ecological diversity and resilience are conducted by other environmental agencies it use three areas ecological degradation ecological knowledge and afforestation.

LIVING STANDARD

“The domain of living standard covers the basic economic status of the people. The indicator access the level of income at the individual and household level sense of financial security room ration and house ownership”(Ibid). The indicators also reflect economic hardship like inability to repair households and this purchase of second hand clothing. The living standard domain consists of four areas income, housing, food security and hardship.

The above said nine domains together comprise 33 (Thirty tree) indicators each of which is composed of several variables. When Unpacked 33 clustered indicators have 24 (Twenty four) variables each domain represents components of well being of the Bhutanese people and the term “well being” refers to fulfilling conditions of a good life as per the values and principles laid down by the concept of Gross National Happiness - Bhutan GNH index, The center for Bhutan studies and GNH Research URL.

The Center for Bhutan studies constructed the GNH index using robust multidimensional methodology known as **Alkire Foster method**. All the nine domains are equally weighted as each domain is considered to be equal in terms of its intrinsic importance as the component of GNH. The Thirty three (33) indicators are statistically reliable, normatively important and equally understood by large audiences. Within each domain two to four indicators were selected that seemed likely to remain informative across time, had high response rate and relatively uncorrelated. Within each domain, the objective indicators are assigned for lighter weights.

Based on all answers for the 33 indicators, it can be determined on how many indicators a person is sufficient and judgment is given how happy a person is. These thresholds are as follows -

- Sufficiency in 77% - 100% of the weighted 33 indicators – deeply happy
- Sufficiency in 66% - 76% extensively happy
- Sufficiency in 50% - 65% narrowly happy
- Sufficiency in 0% - 49% unhappy – or not yet happy

In Bhutan, first three categories are supposed to be happy which is really not true and on this behalf Bhutanese say that 90% of them are happy. Although the constitution of Bhutan (2008, article 9) also directs the state “to promote those conditions that will enable the pursuit of GNH”(Ibid). Which simply means that if the government is unable to create happiness among its people, then there is no point in the existence of the government? After the establishment of a constitutional Monarchy in 2008 and the coronation of Vth king, the government of Bhutan is legally obliged to specify this object so that policies and programs advanced by the new democracy continue to be coherent with it.

In principle, GNH seeks to be policy-sensitive changing over time to response to public actions. Its indicators try to reflect public priorities directly, it tries to address the strengthening or deterioration of social, cultural and environmental achievements whether or not they are the direct objective of policy GNH indicators are carefully chosen so that they stay relevant in future periods as well as the present time in order to measure progress across time and finally the GNH index consists of subgroup consistent hence decomposable by regions and groups (Daga, 2014).

So far the concept of GNH in Bhutan is concerned it has both advantages and disadvantages. While counting its advantages one can say that its version of progress and development is holistic in approach. It's Nine domain together portray more about citizen's life and well being then the standard welfare measure of GDP per capita. It helps the policy makers in realizing who is happy, unhappy, narrowly happy, extensively happy and deeply happy so that they can work on the formula how can GNH be increased. It helps the policy makers to provide certain indicators that can guide development by monitoring activities in a particular domain and convey a message to the government whether a particular policy can be implemented or not. It helps in capturing human well being in a broader aspects in comparison to traditional GDP, socio-economic measures of economic development have done. The indicators of the GNH tries its level to be responsive to relevant changes in policy actions and with the help of this concept the composition of well being and its overall level can be observed over decades and equalities among people that requires special attention can be identified. When countries like China are making their moves towards market friendly policies, Bhutan is referring to maintain its environment ecological and well being placed policies which will lead to sustainable development.

But as we know that every ideas has two aspects in the same way GNH too has some shortcomings - such as it is very difficult to define happiness because it is very subjective. One just cannot give any appropriate definition of happiness and work on it. Hence debate is needed on GNH. “In regards to having such vast array of indicators and domains one problem

with survey based subjective measurement is that citizens might choose to under/over report some of the issues. Further more when Bhutan is pursuing policies like forbidding immigration, restricting tourism, it becomes even challenging to access the impact and effectiveness of GNH. Hence it is crucial to analysis what it preaches”(Kubiserewski et al 2013). In a tiny state like Bhutan having a population of around 700,000 people, one can do subjective survey for 7000 people but for countries like India, China, USA it is difficult to carry service because there are so many hurdles like population budget resistance, resource constraints, geography, topography etc. according to the centre for Bhutan studies and GNH, in GNH survey questionnaire, there are 249 questions with 750 variables objective subjective and open ended in nature and it takes minimum 5 to 6 hours to complete a survey from respondent and by that time an individual might loose interest after a certain point of time moreover the individuals exposure to the outside world will also help in responding. So one can say that there are problems in doing service. According to a report the 2010 GNH survey I took 9 (nine) months to get completed. Out of 20 districts of Bhutan only 12 districts of Bhutan where covered.(GNH Survey Result,2010) National statistical data of Bhutan verify that 5.8% of urban youth and 2% of youth in rural areas are unemployed, for the sake of their higher education universities are needed, modern hospitals and dispensaries are in demand, 63% of literacy for 6 and above is required, inflation, transportation, domestic violence are some more hard hitting problems hiltling of Bhutanese society. On the one hand the cultural domain of GNH lay emphasis on preserving Bhutanese traditions and culture, but on the other hand it ignores the cultural values of 25% Hindus and 5% of Muslims and Christians who live in Bhutan. Their national dress and architectural pattern is very Buddhist centric. Over 100,000 inhabitants of Nepalese ethnicity were deported on the grounds of non-adoption of traditional Bhutanese language, dress and religious practices. Balram Poudyal, President of Bhutan’s People Party formed by the deportees said that “It is not gross national happiness, it is gross national sorrow”. Moreover it is not clear whether people’s

answer to survey questions in different culture and languages mean the same thing. The indicators are also very limited. Many scholars are of the opinion that “the vast majority of Bhutanese are only playing lip services to GNH as they vigorously pursue the goods services and lifestyle of their GDP measuring counter parts¹⁹. Critics comment that GNH is at best an empty slogan including everything and measuring nothing, while at worst it is an ideological cover for repressive and racist policies. In March 2019 Finland was ranked the happiest country in the world twice in a row-according to the world happiness report – an annual publication of the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network; but one just cannot deny the act of Bhutan in playing the role of being a torch bearer in making the nations realise that ultimate goal of an individual and society as well is to attain sheer happiness and nothing else.

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